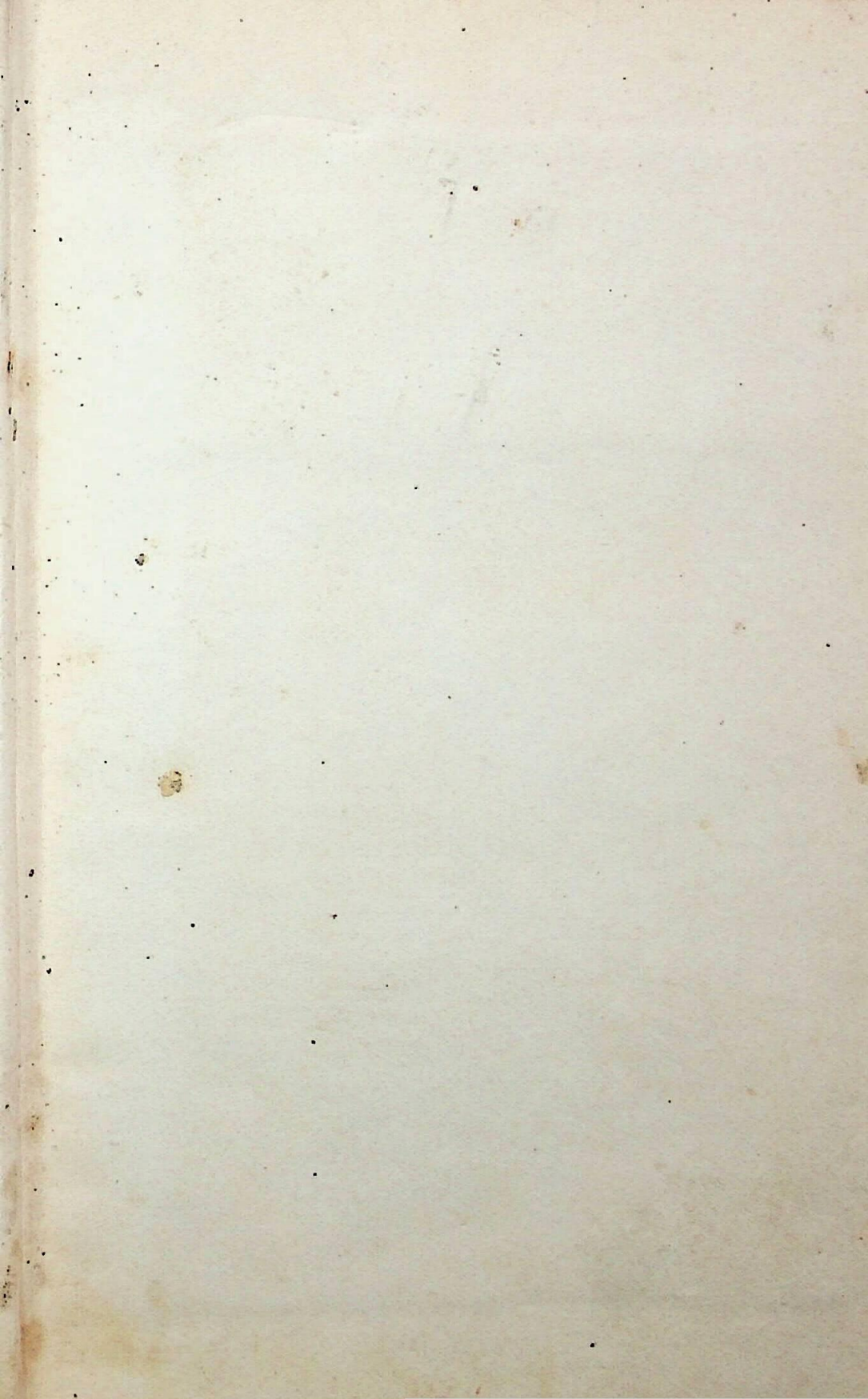
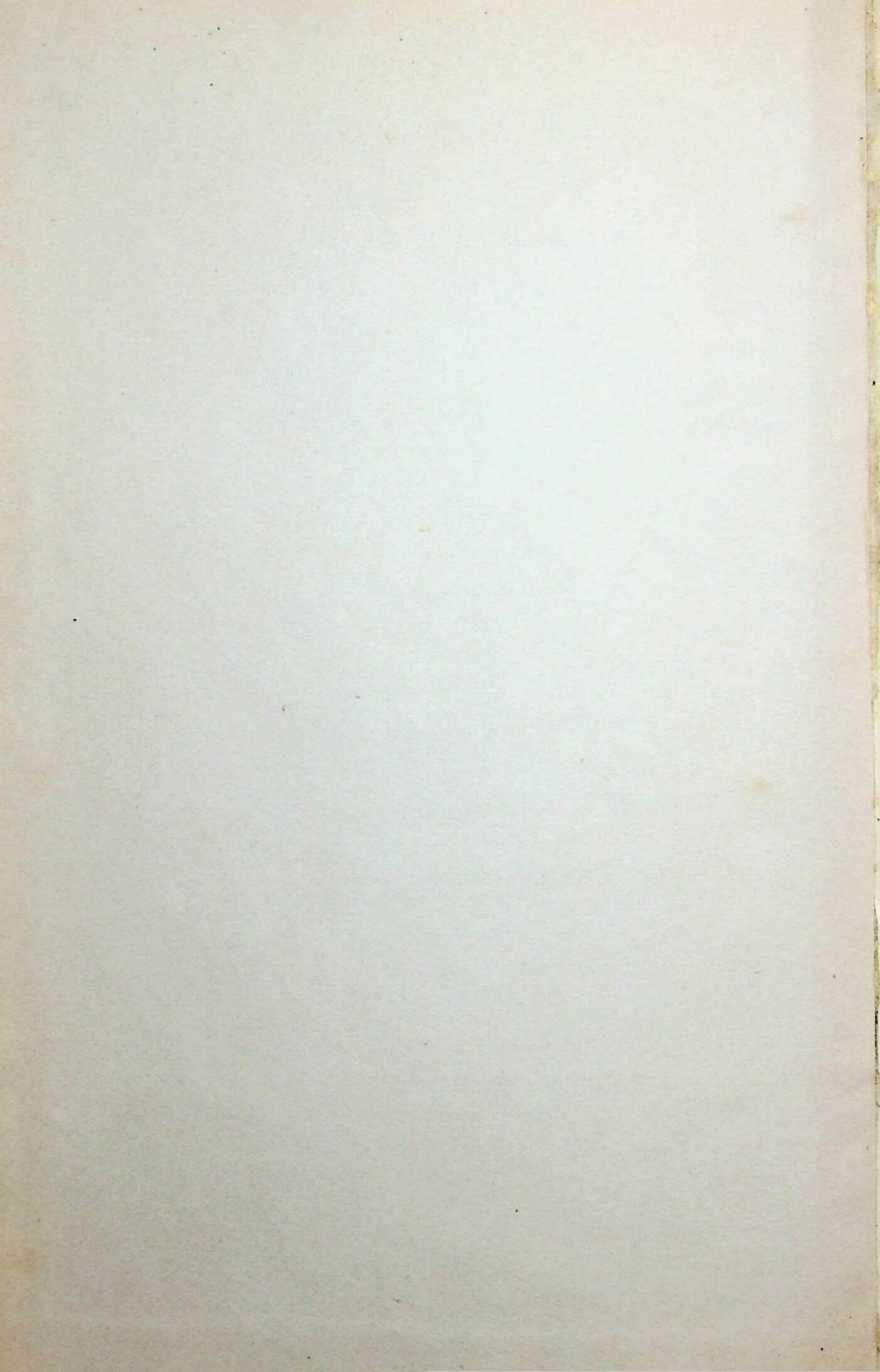


WOMEN
IN
SANSKRIT DRAMAS





WOMEN IN SANSKRIT DRAMAS

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with a foreword by

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Foreword

I have read with pleasure and much absorbing interest Dr. Mrs. Ratnamayidevi Dikshit's thesis on *Women in Sanskrit Dramas*. It has impressed me as a scholarly work dealing with women characters of Sanskrit plays. This work does credit to her not only as a diligent and pains-taking researcher in the field but also as a competent writer. Drama forms an important section of Sanskrit literature and characterisation in the same is the fundamental and lasting element. The interests which keep drama alive are characters, male and female. Dr. Dikshit has chosen women characters of Sanskrit dramas for her study. In the course of her study, she has examined the conception of women in their various spheres as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers. She has shown at length how the divinity of the Indian woman travelled to a low ebb and its subsequent revival. Besides, in a short chapter Dr. Dikshit has given a critical appreciation of the origin and development of Sanskrit Dramas and also in the course of the whole thesis a vivid and lucid account of their growth, decay and revival.

The book is a very useful and a welcome addition to our knowledge of Indian Women through the ages in general and women characters of Sanskrit plays in particular. We also get glimpses into the cultural and social life of ancient, medieval and modern times in India. I am confident Dr. Dikshit's work will be welcomed by all scholars and lovers of Sanskrit studies. I heartily congratulate the author.

December 1, 1964.

—N. N. Chaudhuri

Foreword

I have been asked to write a foreword to this book, and I am glad to do so. It is a book of great interest and value, and I hope it will be widely read and appreciated. The author has done a very thorough and careful study of the subject, and his conclusions are well founded and convincing. The book is written in a clear and concise style, and it is easy to read and understand. It is a book that should be in the hands of every student of the subject, and I hope it will be a valuable addition to the literature of the field.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first part is a general introduction to the subject, and the second part is a detailed study of the various aspects of the subject. The author has done a very thorough and careful study of the subject, and his conclusions are well founded and convincing. The book is written in a clear and concise style, and it is easy to read and understand. It is a book that should be in the hands of every student of the subject, and I hope it will be a valuable addition to the literature of the field.

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P R E F A C E

The quintessence of literature is to represent life in a realistic perspective. And life, as a social concept, is much influenced by *woman*. This abstraction is deliberately used; for women indeed are the organizing and moderating nucleus, around which society in its human aspect revolves.

This thesis, as the title shows, does not only consist of an historical and literary study, but has a certain social pertinence too. It aims at an evaluation of the position of women based on their portrayal in the various Sanskrit plays.

This is an attempt at description, analysis and evaluation of women's character and their position in Indian society from the days of old to the present. This is not a mere study of literature from the aesthetic or literary point of view, but an effort to reach life, the society—woman in society—through literature. In other words, this is a voyage of discovery to understand and realize the *Indian womanhood* in its representative character as depicted in the Sanskrit dramas. For this purpose, as many Sanskrit dramas were studied as could be laid hands on in the book-shops as well as many an important library of Sanskrit manuscripts. To supplement the study by comparison and contrast, numerous plays in the modern Indian languages, e. g., Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati and Malayalam were gone through. Books on dramaturgy and literary criticism in some of these languages and in English could not but be consulted or studied extensively. Sanskrit books of course invariably served as the bed-rack.

The first chapter deals with the origin of Sanskrit drama, its course of development and the relative theories found in the Sanskrit dramaturgy. After setting forth the background in preamble, it is sought to embark upon the study of the subject proper, dealing with the women characters in general. Incidentally, the question as to who played these feminine roles and what was the significance and effect of the related directives and regulations are also discussed. An examination of the corroboration of the above-mentioned analysis in the plays available is followed up. For this purpose, the available Sanskrit plays are divided into six groups on the basis of the discussion that precedes. The division is as follows—

1. The pre-Kālidāsa writers,
2. Kālidāsa,
3. Play-wrights from Kālidāsa to Bhavabhūti,
4. Play-wrights from Bhavabhūti to Jayadeva,
5. The later writers upto the 19th century.
6. The modern Sanskrit play-wrights.

The cumulative analysis and evaluation of the women characters begin with the second chapter. One chapter is devoted to each group. Then follows a chapter in which the archaeological and iconographical evidences have been examined. One chapter is devoted to estimating the trend of the plays written in the modern Indian languages in general and to getting a bird's eye-view of the influence of the Sanskrit plays over the women characters depicted in them by writers closer to our times or still living and contributing their mite to the multifloral literary wealth of the country as a whole.

As pointed out in the beginning, the main aim of this study is to assess the position of women as depicted in the Sanskrit dramas. The evaluative opinion arrived at, is characterized by contrast more than by comparison, by analysis more than by assertion. Thus one re-discovers truism that women enjoyed a much more potential and influential position in the classical period than in the later days.

There is a sceptic jeer that drama is legendary and legends are no evidence. But even a legend has a social content, the proverbial grain of truth, which can hardly be denied. Hence the conclusion arrived at cannot be dismissed as baseless. Being primarily a literary project, this treatise admits of no pretensions on the part of the author of having made a comparative sociological study of the position of women in ancient India. Yet, literature, being life sublimated to language, has its relations to the social realities. So the opinions expressed need no apology apart from the explanations and justifications proffered in the discussions of various points.

While the depiction of contemporary women in Sanskrit drama by the play-wrights of what may be called the mediaeval period cause negative feelings, if not casts a gloom over the mind, it is impossible not to acknowledge the gallant efforts made by the play-wrights of the 19th and 20th centuries at bringing the concept of *Aryan womanhood* to the fore-front once more. The depiction by the modern writers of heroines like *Draupadī*, *Sāvitrī* and *Damayanī* in their true spirit, and the choice of historical figures for their themes, give evidence enough of their aims and intentions. The resurgent influence of this trend is recognized.

It is said that knowledge is assertive about its knowing and wisdom is humble about its relative ignorance. The latter truth is humbly

acknowledged and no claim is laid to the final validity of the opinions expressed; for the spirit of humility and honesty and sincerity of purpose have been the main guiding lights throughout this study. But if the opinions expressed provoke further study and analysis, the purpose of this attempt will have been amply served. For, achievement is not completion; it consists of constant evolution.

My deepest gratitude is due to my revered Guru, professor N. N. Chaudhuri, M. A., D. Litt., the Head of the Sanskrit Department of the University of Delhi, who has ably guided me through the thick and thin of this venture. Without his utmost patience, consideration and kindness and his consistent encouragement, guidance, advice and instructions, this work would or could never have reached its completion. It is his alertness in procuring the newly published plays, in directing me rightly, in checking me at every wrong step and in encouraging the smallest spark of originality that lurked in the study, that has made possible the inclusion of so much material in this thesis. It is impossible for me to thank him enough for all that he has done to help me.

The officials of the Delhi University Library, specially of the Sanskrit Section, deserve no less thanks. But for their sympathetic co-operation, much of the information I have been able to gather, would not have been possible at all.

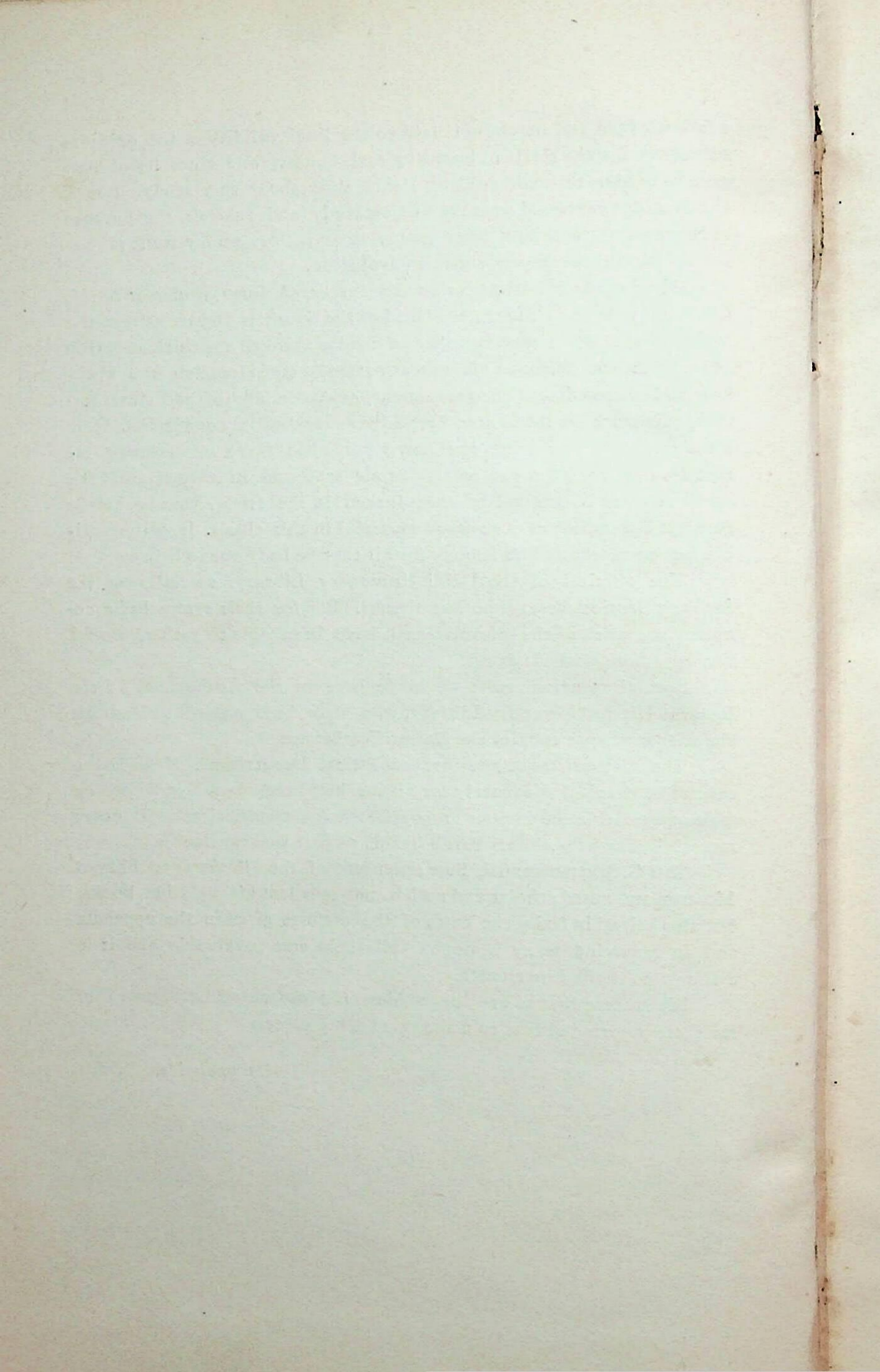
Special mention must be made here of the Authorities of the Banaras Hindu University Library, who were kind enough to lend me the only available copy of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*.

The Authorities of the Archaeological Department, New Delhi, cannot be thanked adequately for all the help they tendered to me by making available the various reference books, manuscripts and other material. The help of Shri Parab in this respect was invaluable.

Shri G. Sivaramamurti, Superintendent of the Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum and noted scholar and author not only lent his valuable books, but also helped in fixing the dates of the pictures given in the appendix and in removing many a doubt. His help was invaluable and it is difficult to thank him enough.

My sincere thanks are due to Messrs. Meharchand Lachhman Das for their untiring efforts to make this book a success.

—Ratnamayidevi Dikshit



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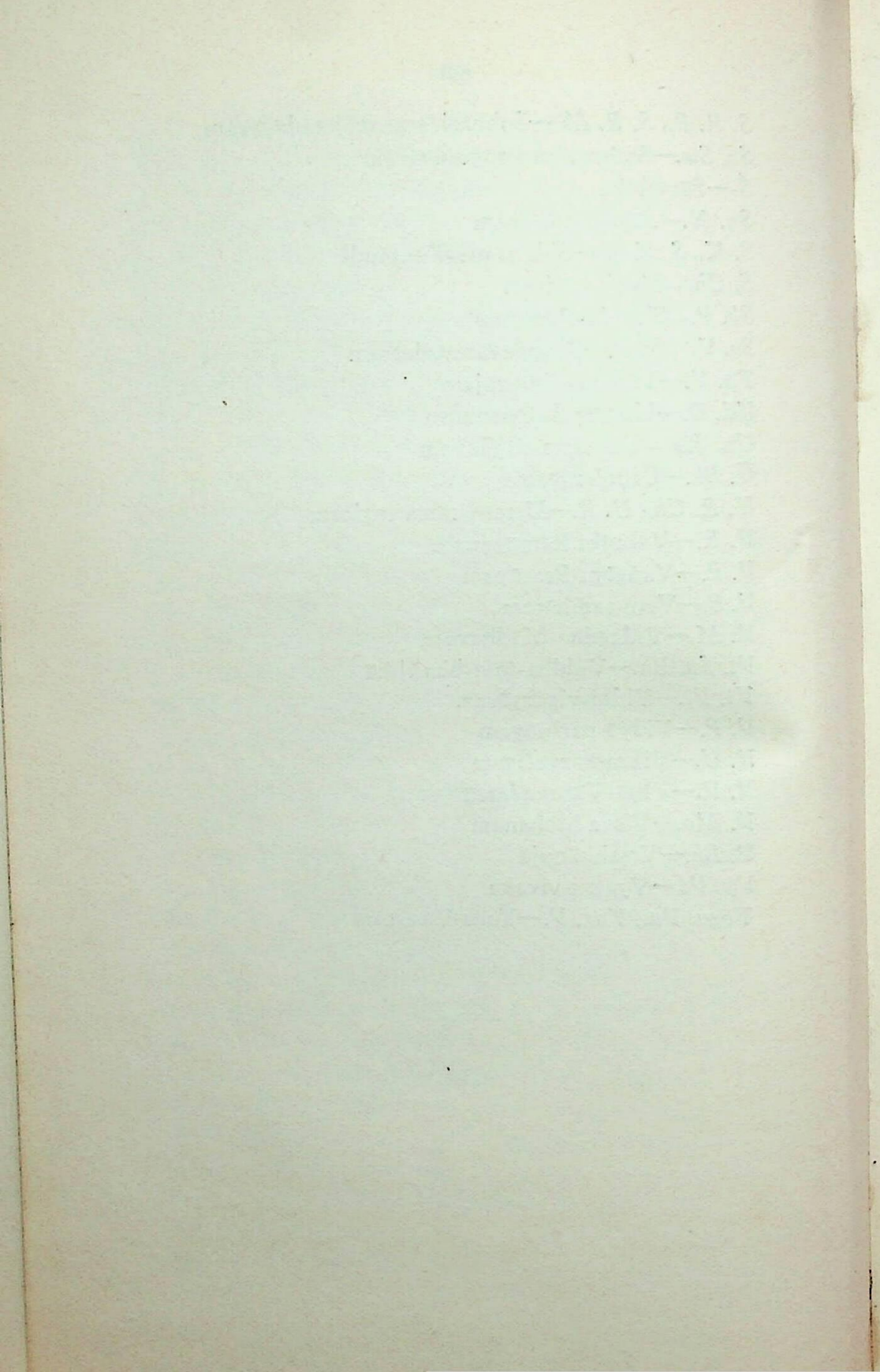
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ABBREVIATIONS

- Ab. Ś.*, *Ab. S.*—Abhijñānaśākuntalam
Ab. N.—Abhiṣekanāṭakam
A. D.—Adbhuta-darpaṇa
Ad. R.—Adhyātma-rāmāyaṇa
A. M.—Amara-maṅgalam
Am.—Amṛtodayam
An. R.—Anargha-rāghavam
A. Ch.—Āścarya-cūdāmani
Arth.—Arthaśāstra
Ash.—Aṣṭādhyāyī
Bā. bh.—Bāla-bhāratam
Bā. R.—Bāla-rāmāyaṇam
Bh. G.—Bhagavad-gīta
Bh. P.—Bhāgavat-purāṇa
Bh. Su.—Bhakta-sudarśanam
Bh. H. N.—Bhartṛhari-nirvedam
Bh. K. S.—Bhūmi-kanyā Sītā
Br. Sam.—Br̥hat-saṁhitā
B. D. P.—Br̥hatadharma-purāṇam
Ch. Tā.—Caṇḍa-tāṇḍavam
Chh. Śā.—Chhatrapati-sāmrājyam
Chh. Śā.—Chhāyā-śākuntalam
D. R.—Daśarūpakam
Dh. Ā.—Dhvaṇyāloka
D. G.—Dūta-ghaṭotkacam
D. A.—Dutāṅgadam
D. Vā.—Dutavākyaṁ
H. C.—Harṣacaritam
Hit.—Hitopadeśam
Kā.—Kādambarī
Kathā.—Kathāsaritsāgaram

- K. V.*—Kāmsavadham
Kau. M.—Kaumudī-Mahotsavam
Kr. N. P.—Kṛṣakāṇām-nāgapāśam
K. S.—Kumārasambhavam
K. M.; Ku. ma.—Kundamālā
Li. P.—Līṅapurāṇam
M. Vy.—Madhyama-vyāyogam
Ma; Bha.; Ma. Bh. ; M. Bh.—Mahābhāratam
M. Bh.—Mahābhāṣyam
M. C.; M. V. Ch.—Mahāvīracaritam
M. M.—Mālatī-mādhavam
M. A.; Mā. Ag.—Mālavikāgnimitram
Manu.—Manusmṛti
Megh. Purva.—Meghadūtam—Purva
Mṛch.; Mṛcch.—Mṛchhakaṭikam
Mu. Rā.—Mudrā-rākṣasam
Na. Da.—Nala-damayantīyam
N. V.—Nalavilāsam
N. M. S.—Nāradya-manu-saṁbitā
N. D.—Nāṭyadarpaṇam
N.S.—Nāṭyaśāstram
P. P.; Padma.—Padma-purāṇam
P. Rā.—Pancarātram
P. Sm.—Parāśara Smṛti
Pa. Va.—Parivartanam
Pr. R.—Prasannarāghavam
Pr. Ra.—Praśānta-ratnākaram
Pr. Yau.—Pratijñā-Yougandharāyaṇam
Pratimā.—Pratimā-nāṭakam
P. Ch.—Puranjanacaritam
Pu. Ra.—Puruṣa-ramaṇīyam
R. V.—Raghuvamśam
R. V.—Ṛgveda
R. P.—Rukmiṇīpariṇayam
S. D.; Sa. D.—Sāhitya Darpaṇam
Sā.—Sānavatam
Sa. M.—Samvādamālā

- S. R. B.*, *S. R. Bh.*—Subhāṣitaratnabhaṇḍāgāram
Sa. Sw.—Saṁyogitā-swayamvaram
Ś.—Śārviloka
Sa. N.—Sāvitri-nāṭakam
S. K., *S. Kau.*—Sidhhānta-Kaumudī
Ś. Ch.—Śivāji-caritam
Sk. P.—Skanda-Purāṇam
Sv. Vā., *S. V.*—Svapnavāsavadattam
Tā. V.—Tāpasa-vatsarājam
Ud. D.—Udgāṭṭṛ-daśānanam
Un. Rā.—Unmatta-rāghavam
Ū. Bh.—Ūrubhaṅgam
U. R. Ch., *U. R.*—Uttara-rāma-caritam
V. R.—Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇam
V. P.—Vaṅgiya-Pratāpam
V. S.—Venī-saṁhāram
V. M.—Vidagdha-Mādhavam
Vi. Sā. Bh.—Viddha-śāla-bhañjikā
Vi. Vi.—Vidhi-viparyāsam
V. P.—Vidyā-pariṇayam
V. U.—Vikramorvaśīyam
V. V.—Viṇā-Vāsavadattā
V. Mo.—Viśva Mohanam
V. Bh.—Vṛṣabhānujā
Vy. Vi.—Vyakti-viveka
Yoga. Vā., *Yog. V.*—Yoga-Vāsiṣṭham
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CHAPTER I

SANSKRIT DRAMAS : ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

A full history of the gradual development of India's social life and literature covering her entire past would have provided the most proper background for any study of this type. Then it would have been possible to examine the women-characters of each play in the framework of their own age and times. But, as every student of social sciences knows, such a history yet remains to be written and hence other makeshift arrangements have to be sought. The alternative is the more strenuous, albeit the less satisfactory, one of trying to reconstruct such a history from the available literary material. Against this resuscitated historical set-up, each play is to be viewed afresh from a new vantage-point. This being the case, before going to the main theme of the study, it is only proper that we attempt to trace the origin and development of Sanskrit dramas from the earliest possible times.

Drama forms an important section of Sanskrit literature. A general study of the available Sanskrit dramas convinces the student that its technique, both literary and dramatic, had attained a high degree of excellence from early times. Based on high and noble principles, the Sanskrit plays, with their highly developed art and technique, are able to stand comparison with the dramas of any other literature, ancient or modern. We can unhesitatingly assert that the Greek and Roman theatres, even in their height of glory, have not staged better dramas than the *Śakuntala* of Kalidāsa, or the *Mṛcchakaṭika* of Śūdraka. We come upon

the Sanskrit drama in its full-fledged form, and the existent dramatic literature does not give an adequate idea as to its origin or development. Still there is enough material which can point to some definite conclusions.

In no country it is possible to trace the origin of the drama back to any single source. In the west, they trace the origin of their drama to Greece. It is said that the religious representations of the Greek people grew to an art by itself, and became the mother of the modern European dramatic art. According to Aristotle, tragedy arose from the leaders of Dithyramb just as comedy did from the leaders of Phallic songs; and it is these formal ritualistic dances and music that combined with the popular forms of enjoyment to make the Greek drama. In England also, the origin of the drama is not traced to one source. The religious elements such as the mystery plays, church liturgies and the morality plays were the factors which later on combined with the popular mimes and farcical episodes to develop into the artistic plays of today.

Working on this analogy, a few scholars have tried to prove that Sanskrit drama also had its origin in religious solemnities and spectacles. Keith thinks that a popular mime might have existed to which the epic lent a helping hand in forming the Sanskrit drama. Ridgeway, after discussing at length the various theories advanced in this connection, arrives at the conclusion that the Hindu dramas arose out of the primitive rites to honour the dead. Professor Weber supposes that the Sanskrit drama had its beginnings influenced by the Greeks, though he could not trace any internal connection between the two.

All these opinions seem to be far-fetched. Whatever may be the merits or defects of the Sanskrit drama, it may be safely asserted that it had unmistakably an indigenous origin.

The very fact that the Indian theatre had already come into existence by the sixth century B. C. is enough to show that it could not have had a Greek origin. For, no historical records point to any cultural relations between the Greeks and the Hindus before the invasion of Alexander in the 3rd

century B. C. Further, the Sanskrit drama belongs to the type described as romantic by modern critics, while the Greek plays belong to the classical type. In fact, the two belong to different schools quite alien to each other in construction, taste and sentiment.

In all likelihood, the germs of Sanskrit dramatic representations are to be sought for in the public exhibitions of dancing, referred to in the Vedas themselves. A study of the Vedic literature goes to show that originally dancing was concerned with rhythmic steps only, and was later accompanied by appropriate bodily movements also. We hear of a special institution in the Vedic age called *Sabha* or *Samiti*, where matters concerning the clan were regularly discussed. They might have served as centres of entertainment and cultural pursuits as well. It is true that drama was not known in those days and no reference to theatres or plays is found anywhere in the Vedic literature. But there are many dialogues spread all over the Vedic and Upanishadic literature. The dialogues between Saramā and Panīś¹, Yama and Yami², Indra and Varuṇa³, Purūravas and Urvaśī⁴, are a few examples. There are proofs to show that some kind of mimicry also existed as pastime among the people. Historical records relating to ancient India make it quite clear that, from the remotest times, Indians were keen enthusiasts of music. Thus we see there is much of dancing, singing, dialogue and mimicry, existing as separate elements in the Vedic age itself. It is quite possible that all these gradually mingled together and adjusted themselves to constitute the various types of Sanskrit dramas. The story about the creation of the Nāṭyveda, found in the Nāṭyaśāstra, goes far to support the above conclusion.

The Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata is the earliest work known to us on dramaturgy. In this work, every thing is classified

1. R. V. X. 108

2. R. V. X. 10

3. R. V. IV. 42

4. R. V. X. 95

and catalogued in detail : forms of drama, types of characters, their qualities, sentiments, gestures to express the various feelings, modes of dress, method of acting and many other things. This induces one to conjecture that Bharata was drawing upon a living stage which was catering to the full satisfaction of the learned public of the day. And undoubtedly this work on dramaturgy is of a much earlier date than any work on poetics. Scholars, after much discussion and deliberation, attribute Bharata to the second century A. D.

Long before this period, we have references to Naṭa, Nāṭya and Nāṭaka. There is a reference to the Nāṭasūtras,¹ in Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī where Śilālī and Kṛśāśva are cited as the authors of the same. The Nāṭasūtras are defined by the great grammarian as the rules followed by the Nāṭas. But it is not known whether the word Naṭa refers to an actor or a dancer. In any case, by the time of Patanjali, the word had come to mean an actor, as could be inferred from a reference to the women-actors.² Moreover, Patanjali refers to Kāmsavadha and Bālibandha in the course of his discussions about using present tense in describing past events³. These references clearly indicate the existence of plays and actors when he wrote. Pāṇini dates back to the sixth century B. C. and Patanjali to the second century B. C. Hence, we are justified in concluding that Naṭa and Nāṭaka must have come into being not later than the fifth century B. C.

The expression of ideas in the form of dialogues

1. पाराशर्यशिलालिभ्यां भिक्षु नट सूत्रयोः, पाराशर्येण प्रोक्तं भिक्षुसूत्रमधीयते ।
पाराशरिणो भिक्षवः । शैलालिनो नटाः ॥ Ash : 4. 3. 110
कर्मन्दकृशाश्वदिनि । भिक्षु नटसूत्रयोरित्येव । कर्मन्देन कर्मन्दिनो भिक्षवः ।
कृशाश्विनो नटाः ॥ 4. 3. 111
2. नटानां स्त्रियो रंगं गता यो यः पृच्छति कस्य यूयं कस्य यूयमिति तं तं तव
तव इत्याहुः ॥ M. Bh. 3. 2. 111
3. ये तावदेते शोभनिका नामैते प्रत्यक्षं कंसं घातयन्ति, प्रत्यक्षं बालिं बन्ध-
यन्तीति ॥ M. Bh. 3. 1. 126

is familiar not only in the Vedas, but also in the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads. Later on, the great epics and Purāṇas contain much in the form of conversations. Perhaps in the epic recitations, the reciter accompanied the narration with gestures and songs to make it more effective and impressive. The greater appreciation shown by the audience must have given a clue to the earlier dramatist as to the immense possibilities of dramatizing the same stories. The very ideal of literature is to combine instruction with enjoyment. Drama, the cream of literature, is most suited to fulfil this aim. The Creator said to the sage Bharata, "This Nāṭya, portraying the acts of good, bad and indifferent people, will be a counsellor as to what is good in general. This being the reflection of the activities of the various people, will be an instructor, as it were, giving them advice, making them wise, good and longlived."¹

Though much has been said and written about the Sanskrit drama, still it is not easy to determine the precise stages of its evolution. But we have enough material to draw upon, in order to reach a fairly correct conclusion about how the height was reached. The Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata is the main authority to which we look for support. Taking the speech from the Ṛgveda, music from the Sāmaveda, action from the Yajurveda, and sentiments from the Atharvaveda, Brahmā is said to have created the fifth Veda—the dramatic art.² Following up this story, we are able to gather much information about the course of development and also other details.

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1. उत्तमाधममध्यानां नराणां कर्मसंश्रयम् । हितोपदेशजननं घृतिं क्रीडां
सुखादिकृत् ॥ धर्मं यशस्यमायुष्यं हितं बुद्धिविवर्धनम् । लोकोपदेशजननं
नाट्यमेतद्भविष्यति ॥ N. S. I. 113-115
 2. जग्राहपाठ्यमृगवेदाद् सामेभ्यो गीतमेव च ।
यजुर्वेदादभिनयान् रसानाथर्वणादपि ॥
वेदीपवेदः संबद्धो नाट्यवेदो महात्मना ।
एवं भगवता सृष्टो ब्रह्मणा सर्वं वेदिना ॥ N. S. I. 17-18

Even though the Nāṭyaveda is said to have been created by Brahmā himself and taught by him to Bharata, there were many obstacles cropping up one by one in the staging of the plays. First and foremost came the opposition of the *asuras* who thought that the choice of Indravijaya as the theme to be acted, was an insult to them.¹ So, they created many obstacles during the performance. To overcome this, the theatre was built by Viśvakarmā according to the advice of Brahmā, and many protective rituals were performed.² The enraged *asuras* also were pacified by Brahma.³ After this, the play Amṛtamanthana was enacted successfully.⁴ Another play Tripuradāha was staged⁵ with Lord Śiva as the chief guest. Pleased by this spectacular entertainment, He presented to them another equipment to add to the beauty of the art. He taught the art of Dance to Taṇḍu, one of Bharata's sons, who became the preceptor to others.⁶ When dance was included in the performances, a fresh difficulty arose. Among the hundred sons of Bharata, there was none who could present the *lāsya* type of dance and the Kaiśiki Vṛtti which manifest the soft, sweet and beautiful side of the art. Once again Brahmā came to the rescue and the proper personages were created for the purpose.

All these details are very significant in themselves

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1. योज्यं भगवता सूष्टो नाट्यवेदः सुरेच्छया ।
प्रत्यादेशोऽयमस्माकं सुरार्थं भवता कृतः ॥ N. S. I. 103
 2. N. S. I. 66-98
 3. N. S. I. 101-120
 4. ततोऽस्म्युक्तो भगवता योजयामृतमन्थनं ।...
तस्मिन् समवकारे तु प्रयुक्ते देवदानवाः ।
हृष्टाः समभवन् सर्वे कर्मभावानुदर्शनात् ॥ N. S. IV. 2-4
 5. पूर्वरंगे कृतं पूर्वं तत्रायं द्विजसत्तमाः ।
तथा त्रिपुरदाहश्च डिमसंज्ञः प्रयोजितः ॥ N. S. I.
 6. N. S. IV. 11-266

and they help the student in tracing the course of development of Sanskrit drama, as we shall presently see.

Drama is regarded by Bharata as the art of reproduction by imitation. Brahmā defines the word Nāṭya thus, "as the whole universe is represented by suitable actions here, it is called Nāṭya".¹ Consistently with this idea, Dhanañjaya defines Nāṭya as the reproduction of situation in his Daśarūpaka. He further adds, "as the various actors are given visible forms, a drama is called Rūpaka."²

Nāṭyadarpaṇa also explains the word Nāṭaka more or less in the same way³. Man enjoys mimicry from his earliest childhood. He learns from imitation. Imitating others and modifying the original as suited to himself, he forms his own life. So, there is nothing more suitable than a drama to tell the man what is right and what is wrong. The advantage of the dramatist lies in the fact that he can attract all kinds of people, big and small, rich and poor, learned and illiterate alike. It is said in the Nāṭyaśāstra that even the tired and sorrow-stricken get relief in witnessing a play.⁴ This is the statement of a psychologist who has observed the world in all its phases. It is this view that has been accepted by the Indian dramatists. Accordingly, imitation became the main element in the dramatic art.

The first play staged by Bharata's disciples immediately after the creation of the Nāṭyaveda was the Indravijaya, an imitation of the victory of the *devas* over the *asuras*

1. योऽयं स्वभावो लोकस्य सुखदुःखसमन्वितः ।
सोऽङ्गाद्याभिनयोपेतो नाट्यमित्यभिधीयते ॥ N. S. I.
2. अवस्थानुकृतिर्नाट्यम् रूपं हस्यतयोच्यते ।
रूपकं तत्समारोपात् ॥ D. R. p. 8
3. नाटकमिति—नाटयति विचित्रं, रञ्जनात् प्रवेशेन पात्राणां सम्यानां हृदयं
नर्तयति इति नाटकम् । N. D.
4. दुःखार्तानां श्रमार्तानां शोकार्तानां तपस्विनाम् ।
श्रान्तिजननं काले नाट्यमेतन्मयाकृतम् ॥ N. S. I. 114

The very wording of the description, "the imitation of how the *asuras* were defeated by the *devas*",¹ has its own story to tell. It was only an imitation of what actually happened. All the *Devas* were very much pleased at the performance, and every one of them gave something or the other to the actors as presents, which were the various equipments useful for the stage and the actors. At this time, goddess *Sarasvati* is said to have given to this visual entertainment the quality of being heard also.² This obviously suggests the advent of literary talents to help the actors, so to say.

There seems to be nothing wrong in concluding that the first plays were staged in the open air, where they were accessible to attacks and disturbances from outsiders. Naturally the necessity of a well-planned theatre was felt, and slowly the theatre came into existence. The main sentiment depicted in the *Indravijaya* was enmity—*dveṣa*—and it was full of feuds, battles and other calamities.³ This, along with the absence of female-characters, supports the view that it represented the first stage of the dramatic art.

The story of the attack by the *Asuras* and the consequent building of the theatre leads us on to the next stage. The plays enacted after the pacification of the *Asuras* were *Amṛtamanthana* and *Tripuradāha*, belonging to the types called *Samavakāra*,⁴ and *Dima*⁵ respectively. The description of these, as given by *Bharata*, shows almost the same characteristics as the first play, except for the specific inclusion of

1. तदन्तेनुकृतिर्वद्धा यथा दैत्याः सुरुजिताः । N. S. I. 57

2. श्राव्यत्वं प्रेक्षणीयस्य ददौ देवी सरस्वती ॥ N. S. I. 61

3. संफोट विद्रव कृता छेदभेद्याह्वात्मिका ॥ N. S. I. 58

4. समवकारः देवासुरबीजकृतः प्रख्यातोदात्तनायकश्चैव ॥

अयङ्कस्तथा त्रिकपटः त्रिविद्रवः, स्यान्निश्चङ्गारः ।

द्वादश नायक बहुलो ह्यष्टादशनाटिका प्रमाणश्च ॥ N. S. XVIII. 114-115

5. प्रख्यात वस्तुविषयः प्रख्यातोदात्तनायकश्चैव ।

षड्त्रिंशल्लक्षणयुक्तश्चतुरङ्गोवैडिः कार्यः ॥ N. S. XVIII. 136

the three types of erotic sentiments, and the suggestion of having as few women-characters as possible. Another point worthy of notice is that, at this time the plays staged are not only cited by their names, but the types to which they belonged also are mentioned¹. It seems the literary talents combining with fertile imagination had created various kinds of plays, which warranted certain classifications also by this time.

The addition of dance, gift of Lord Śiva, to the theatrical representations seems to mark another step in the forward march of this art. The science of acting was complete in its necessary items and dance was not felt needed either to clarify the meanings or the expressions. Doubts arose in the minds of the spectators as to the utility of this new item, and they are voiced in the question of the sages to Bharata². He answers plainly that there is actually no necessity to have dance in the dramatic performances ; but it is added because it enhances the beauty, and also because it is considered as auspicious³. Thus the dramatic art was complete in its varied forms. Once the models came into

1. a. ततोऽभ्युक्तो भगवता योजयामृतमंथनम् । एतदुत्साहजननं सुरप्रीतिकरं
तथा ॥ योऽयं समवकारस्तु धर्मकायार्थं साधकः । मया प्रप्रथितो विद्वन्
सप्रयोगः प्रयुज्यताम् ॥

तस्मिन् समवकारे तु प्रयुक्ते देवदानवाः ।

हृष्टाः समभवन् सर्वे कर्मभावानुदर्शनाद् ॥ N. S. V. 2-4

- b. ततो हिमवतः पृष्ठे नाना नग समाकुले ।

बहुचूतद्रुमाकीर्णे रम्यकन्दरनिर्भरे ॥

पूर्वरंगे कृते पूर्वं तत्रायं द्विज सत्तमाः ।

तथा त्रिपुरदाहश्च डिमसंज्ञं प्रयोजिताः ॥ N. S. IV 9-10

2. यदा प्राप्यर्थमर्थानां तज्ज्ञैरभिनयः स्मृतः । कस्मान्नृत्तं कृतं ह्येतत्कः स्वभाव-
मपेक्षते ॥ न गीतकार्यसम्बद्धं न चाप्यर्थस्य भावकं । कस्मान्नृत्तं कृतं
ह्येतद्गीतेष्वासारितेषु च ॥ N. S. IV. 267-268

3. अत्राप्येते न खल्वर्थं कञ्चिन्नृत्तमपेक्षते । किंतु शोभां जनयतीत्यतो नृत्तं

existence, brains and imagination were not wanting to increase the number of plays based on the various phases of life as found in this world. Thus there must have accumulated a vast number of plays, varying in nature and having different characteristics based upon the sentiments, hero, theme, time, place, number of characters represented, and other things—plays ranging from one to fourteen acts, and depicting divine beings, kings, or even demons in the leading role; plays religious, secular, political, allegorical, comic or tragic. In short, the Sanskrit dramatists allowed their imagination and fine histrionic sense to infuse life, flesh and blood into skeletons, and also translated formulas into lively forms of beauty.

All these dramas are not available for study to posterity, because most of them have disappeared. But we have innumerable specimens quoted by the various dramaturgists and rhetoricians who describe different types of dramas and also cite examples from them.

While Nāṭyaśāstra¹ refers to ten types of dramas and one minor type, the later dramaturgists describe eighteen minor types apart from the ten types described by Bharata. Of the ten types of *rūpakas*, the Dima, Samavakāra, Vyāyoga and Ihāmrga are classified as *Aviddhas*²—the hard or masculine types, while the remaining six, Bhāṇa, Vithī,

प्रवर्तितम् ॥ प्रायेण सर्वलोकस्य नृत्तमिष्टं स्वभावतः । माङ्गल्यमिति कृत्वा
च नृत्तमेतत् प्रकीर्तितम् ॥ विवाह प्रसवावाहप्रमोदाभ्युदयादिषु । विनोद-
करणं चेति नृत्तमेतत् प्रवर्तितम् ॥ N. S. IV. 269-271

1. नाटकं सप्रकरणमङ्को व्यायोग एव च । भाणः समवकारश्च वीथी प्रहसनं
डिमः ॥ ईहामृगश्च विज्ञेयो दशमो नाट्य लक्षणो ॥ N. S. XVIII 2-3
2. प्रयोगो द्विविधश्चैव विज्ञेयो नाटकाश्रयः । सुकुमारस्तथाविद्धो नाट्ययुक्ति
समाश्रयः ॥ यत्वाविद्धाङ्गहारं तच्छेद्याभेद्याहवात्मकम् । मायेन्द्रजालबहुलं
पुंसो नेपथ्यसंयुतं ॥ पुरुषैर्बहुभिर्युक्तं अल्पस्त्रीकं तथैव च । सात्वत्यार-
भटीयुक्तं नाट्यमाविद्धमेव तत् ॥ डिमः समवकारश्च व्यायोगेहाङ्गी तथा ।
एतान्याविद्धसंज्ञानि विज्ञेयानि प्रयोक्तृभिः ॥ N. S. XIII 53-61

Anka, Prahasana, Nāṭaka and Prakaraṇa, along with the minor type called Nāṭikā, belong to the *Sukumāra*¹ class.

The first group is characterised by hard and crude actions fit for male actors only. But, the other group is characterised by the presence of high and noble women-characters and depicts noble and high culture. All these Rūpakas except the Dima, Samavakāra and Īhāmṛga, have only one act each, while these three are allowed to have four. The Nāṭaka is to have at least five acts, Nāṭikā four, and Prakaraṇa ten. The last three types represent the height of glory reached by the theatrical art in ancient India. The various characteristics of these ten types are described by Bharata as well as by later dramaturgists, who have gone into the details of the eighteen minor types also. Though the differences between these types are very minute and subtle, they are undoubtedly representative in character and definitely point to an age when dramatic art was very much alive in its variety as well as glory.

A close and critical study of these Rūpakas and Upa-rūpakas is enough to convince the student about the possibility of accepting them as the various landmarks in the course of development of the Sanskrit drama.

Though it is stated that Bharata was the first actor who learned this science from the Creator himself, we come across certain references within the Nāṭyaśāstra itself to earlier preceptors who are said to have expounded the various constituents of the dramatic art. For example, when asked about music and orchestra Bharata says, 'I will repeat what has been said by the earlier sages Swāti, Nārada and Puṣkara.'² In another place it is said that the dramatic art was brought to the terrestrial world by the

1. नाटकं सप्रकरणं भाणो वीथ्यङ्कनाटिके । सुकुमार प्रयोगानि मानुषेष्व-
श्रिद्धानि च ॥ N. S. XIII. 58

2. यथोक्तं मुनिभिः पूर्वं स्वात्तिनारदपुष्करैः । सर्वलक्षणसंयुक्तं सर्वातिव्य-
निर्दिष्टम् ॥ N. S. XXXIV. 341

sons and disciples of Bharata, where the name Kohala is emphasised as of the one who would establish this art in this world.¹ There are other names also quoted in the course of the narrative by Bharata. Explaining his own contribution as *Samgraham*, he says that he is only summarising what was already existing as *Sūtras* and *Bhāṣyas*.² It is quite probable that the names referred to were of the earlier dramaturgists who contributed their mite before Bharata and his systematic and ingenious exposition of every thing that covered the science of drama.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa* we are told that when peace and order prevailed, maidens used to go about in the evenings to gardens for recreation or to witness plays.³ There are references in the epic about dramatic companies formed of women exclusively.⁴

In one place, *Sītā* says to *Rāma* that he is behaving like a *Śailūṣa*—an actor—in leaving her behind in *Ayodhya*.⁵ In *Mahābhārata* there is a reference to a puppet show.⁶ We hear of dramatic performances in Royal courts

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1. एवमुर्वीतले नाट्यं शिष्यैः समवतारितम् । भरतानां च वंशोऽयं भविष्यं च प्रवर्तितः ॥ कोहलादिभिरेवं तु वत्स शाण्डिल्य धूर्तितैः ॥

N. S. XXXVIII. 23-24

2. विस्तरेणोपदिष्टानामर्थानां सूत्र भाष्ययोः । निबन्धो यः समासेन संग्रहं तं विदुर्बुधाः ॥

N. S. VI. 9

3. तास्तु योवनशालिन्यो रूपवत्यः स्वलंकृताः ।

उद्यानभूमिमागत्य प्रावृषीव शतहृदाः ॥

गायन्त्यो नृत्यमानाश्च वादयन्त्यश्च सर्वशः ।

आमोदं परमं जग्मुर्वराभरणभूषिताः ॥ V. R. I. 22. 12-13

4. वधूनाटकसंघैश्च सयुक्तां सर्वतः पुरीं ॥ V. R. I. 5. 12

5. स्वयं तु भार्या कौमारीं चिरमध्युषितां सतीम् ।

शैलूप इव मां राम परेम्यो दातुमिच्छसि ॥ V. R. II. 30

6. यथा दारुमयीं योषां नरोधीरस्समाहितः ।

ईर्यत्यङ्गमङ्गानि तथा राजन्निमाः प्रजाः ॥ Ma : Bha. IV. 26.

and public places for the entertainment of people. There are references in Harivaṃśa,¹ Manusmṛiti² and Arthaśāstra³ which prove the existence of actors and dramatic performances at the time. All these point to the conclusion that Sanskrit drama had reached its full-fledged form long before the date of the Nāṭyaśāstra.

According to the statement in the Nāṭyaśāstra,⁴ dramas are supposed to depict the world as it were in a mirror. The whole universe with its good and evil, with its happiness and sorrows, is presented on the stage. The onlooker

1. तत्र यज्ञे वर्तमाने सुनाट्येन नटस्तदा ।
महर्षिस्तोषयामास भद्रनामेति नामतः ॥ Ma : Bha. XVIII.
2. पिशुनानुतिनोश्चान्नं कृतविक्रयिणस्तथा ।
शैलूपतन्तुवायान्नं कृतघ्नस्यान्नमेव च ॥ Manu. IV. 214
3. गीतवाद्यापाठ्यनृत्तनाट्याक्षरचित्र वीणावेणुमृदङ्गपरचितज्ञानगंधमाल्य-
संबूहनसम्पादन संवाहनवैशिककलाज्ञानानि, गणिकादासीरङ्गोपजीवनीश्च
ग्राह्यतो राजमण्डलादाजीवं कुर्यात् । गणिकापुत्रान् रङ्गोपजीविनश्च
मुख्यान्निष्पादयेयुः सर्वतालावेचाराणां च । Arth. II. 27. 41-42
4. भवतां देवतानां च शुभाशुभविकल्पकैः ।
कर्मभावान्वयापेक्षी नाट्यवेदो मया कृतः ॥
नैकान्ततोऽत्र भवतां देवानां चापि भावनम् ।
त्रैलोक्यस्यास्य सर्वस्य नाट्यं भावानु कीर्तनम् ॥
क्वचिद्धर्मः क्वचित्क्रीडा क्वचिदर्थः क्वचिच्छ्रमः ।
क्वचिद्धास्यं क्वचिद्युद्धं क्वचित्कामः क्वचिद्धवः ॥
धर्मो धर्मप्रवृत्तानां कामः कामार्थसेविनाम् ।
निग्रहो दुर्विनीतानां मत्तानां दमनक्रिया ॥
क्लीबानां घाष्टर्चजननं उत्साहः शूरमानिनाम् ।
अवोधानं विवोधश्च वैदग्ध्यं विदुषामपि ॥
ईश्वराणां विलासश्च स्थैर्यं दुःखार्दितस्थ च ।
अर्थोपजीविनामर्थो धृतिरुद्विग्नचेतसाम् ॥
नाभावोपसम्पन्नं नानावस्थान्तरात्मकम् ।
लोकवृत्तानुकरणं नाट्यमेतन्मया कृतम् ॥ N. S. I. 106-112

is to see himself and his surroundings held up in their true colours by the dramatist. We see before us men, women and children, kings and queens, Brahmarṣis and Devarṣis, Brahmanas and Śudras, as they are, or as they ought to be. The good or evil in society, the good or evil in man, and its consequences are to be presented on the stage. Though all the happenings of the world are to be portrayed on the stage, it is strictly ordained that no violent action, shameful episodes, shocking or revolting scenes should be shown. A well-acted play creates a firm and durable impression on the human mind. This possibility was realised by our ancient dramatists, as is clearly proved by the delineation of characters in the best Sanskrit plays. The various characters thus depicted on the Sanskrit stage have lived up to this day, shedding their lustre in the literary as well as the practical world. Even the most unimportant character of the ancient Indian theatre has a story to tell and a lesson to give the modern man, if the latter will only care to learn.

To achieve the aim of combining instruction with enjoyment, every kind of character is brought on the stage. Bharata has described, in minute detail, the characters to be depicted in the various plays. Though many scholars have explored the dense field of dramatic literature, none seems to have been adequately interested in the innumerable and varied types of characters presented therein. Much valuable information concerning the theatre, its technique and such other details in theory and practice has been gathered, but the living and talking elements seem to have been rather neglected, except for the general information about the types of characters found in the various books of criticism and dramaturgy. A detailed study of the characters serves to throw much light on the life and history of our people in ancient times. And it is much more true in the case of the female characters.

From the earliest dawn of civilization, it is an accepted fact that women form an important constituent of society.

The condition of a society can be correctly judged by the position it gives to its women. This is the idea propagated by the Vedic Aryans and their descendants up till quite a late period, as is clear from the statement : "Dharma and Artha are achieved through them; wealth, prosperity and happiness are derived from them; and hence women are to be honoured by every one who wishes happiness in this world¹." The ancient poets, true to this ideal of society, have portrayed all types of women and have shown the contrast, emphasizing the desirable qualities, and differentiating them from the undesirable, in all spheres of life. Bharata seems to have had an abundant variety of examples before him when he drafted the rules and specified the characters to be presented on the stage.

In the Nāṭyaśāstra all characters are first classified into three sections : the best, the worst and the mediocre.² Then follows the more detailed classification of each individual character. The women characters also are of varied types and belonging to different status in society from the highest queen to the lowest maid-servant, divine, semidivine and human beings. Minute details are given about the heroes and heroines. But the other characters are only mentioned and the details are left to the discrimination of the writers with the instruction that the usage of the time should be followed as far as the dress, characterisation and other details are concerned.³

1. तदर्थं धर्मार्थौ विभववरसौख्यानि च ततः ।

गृहे लक्ष्म्यो मान्याः सततमबला मानविभवैः ॥ स्त्रीप्रशंसा p. 6

2. समासतस्तु त्रिविधाः प्रकृतिः परिकीर्तिताः ।

स्त्रीणां च पुरुषाणां च उत्तमाधममध्यमाः ॥ N. S. XXIV. 1

3. नोक्ता येऽपि तु तेऽप्यत्र लोकाद्ग्राह्यास्तु पण्डितैः ।

लोको वेदास्तथाव्यात्म प्रमाणं त्रिविधं स्मृतम् ॥ N. S. XXV. 121-122

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लोकसिद्धं भवेत् सिद्धं नाट्यं लोकात्मकं त्विदम् ॥ N. S. XXV. 125

“Since all that is done here in this world by human beings has happiness as the ultimate aim, and this happiness can be complete only when there is companionship between man and woman, so women are the ultimate sources of happiness”¹ says Bharata. And then he goes on to give the various details about the nature, habits and other signs that help to portray the true characters as found in the world.²

One very remarkable characteristic of the Sanskrit stage is that the particular aspect of woman as wife alone has been emphasised again and again. The position of woman as the companion of man, either as wife or beloved, has been presented in almost every drama. The other relationships of women with men do not seem to have attracted the ancient people. The erotic sentiment is given the honoured name, *Rasarāja*, the king of all sentiments. Conjugal love on the physical plane and its representation on the stage has been described in detail by Bharata, and the later theorists on dramaturgy and poetics follow his footsteps faithfully. As a consequence almost all the Sanskrit dramas have love for their theme and the final happy union of the couple as the denouement. Only very few exceptions exist such as *Mudrārākṣasa*, *Veṇīśāhāra*, *Mahāvīracharita* and *Chanda Kausika* where scope was found for politics also.

These being the circumstances, it is only natural that, the definition, description and other details concerning the heroine completely depend upon her relations with the hero. The fact that Bharata's classification of the heroines is limited to their relations with the respective heroes supports the above conclusion. After enumerating the various women-characters to be depicted on the stage,³ he proceeds to des-

1. सर्वः प्रायेण लोकोज्यं सुखमिच्छति सर्वदा ॥ N. S. XX. 93

सुखस्य च स्त्रियो मूलं नानाशीलधरादच ताः ॥ N. S. XX. 93

2. N. S. XXII. 94-282

3. N. S. XXIV. 6-16

cribe the peculiarities of each. The descriptions of Mahādevī,¹ Devi,² Nṛpavallabhā³ and Sthāyini⁴ clearly show that they are to be depicted as the wives of the leading characters. "All women belong to three classes", says Bharata, "they are best, worst and mediocre."⁵ Then he continues to define each of these three,⁶ and the types of heroines are taken up after this. The first classification, though not found in the Nāṭyaśāstra, depends on the nature and tem-

1. तथा मूर्धावसिक्ता च कुलशीलविभूषिता ।
समतुल्यचरित्रा च वयस्या क्रोधवर्जिता ॥
अनीष्या नृपशीलज्ञा समदुःखसुखास्पदा ।
शान्तिस्वसत्ययनैर्नित्यं भर्तुर्मङ्गलकाक्षिणी ॥
पतिव्रता क्षमायुक्ता अन्तःपुरहिते रता ।
एभिर्गुणैस्तु संयुक्ता महादेवी प्रकीर्तिता ॥ N. S. XXII. 18-20
2. एभिरेव गुणैर्युक्ता बहुमानविवर्जिता ।
गविता राजपुत्री च रतिसंभोगतत्परा ॥
बाला नित्योज्ज्वलगुणा प्रतिपक्षेष्वसूयिका ।
यौवनादि गुणोन्मत्ता सा देवीत्यभिधीयते ॥ N. S. XXII. 21-22
3. सेनापतेरमात्यानां दण्डिता तत्परा च या ।
तनया नामतश्चैव स्वामिनीत्यभिसंज्ञिता ॥
शीलरूपगुणैर्यास्तु संयुक्ता नृपवल्लसभा ॥ N. S. XXII. 23-24
4. N. S. XXIV. 25-27
5. सर्वासामेवनारीणां त्रिविधा प्रकृतिः स्मृता ।
उत्तमा मध्यमा चैव तृतीया चाधमा स्मृता ॥ N. S. XXIII. 33
6. गृह्णाति कारणाद् रोषं गतेष्वर्था प्रव्रवीति च ।
कार्यकाल विशेषज्ञा सुभगा सा स्मृतोत्तमा ॥
पुंसः कामयते या तु पुरुषैर्या तु काम्यते ।
कामोपचारकुशला प्रतिपक्ष्याभ्यसूयिनी ॥
ईर्ष्यातिरा चाभिमता क्षणक्रोधा च गविता ।
क्षणं प्रसाद्यंते या च सा नारी मध्यमा स्मृता ॥
अस्मान्ने कोपमायाति दुःशीला चातिमानिनी ।
पुंसां प्रतिकूला च दीर्घरोषाधमा स्मृता ॥ N. S. XXIII. 36-39

perament of the character. If she is of young age, easily convinced and innocent, she goes under the name, Mugdhā. One who is quite competent to understand the deceitful behaviour of her husband or lover, and who is powerful enough to deal with him as he deserves, is classified as Pragalbā. And she, who has passed the stage of the first, and who has not yet reached the height of the second, goes by the name Madhyā. The next classification is based on the attitude of the hero towards the heroine. There are eight kinds mentioned in this connection, and the characteristics of each are enumerated and described.¹

It is very significant that Bharata gives detailed instructions only about the heroines. The other characters to be represented are named and general hints are given. But no mention whatever is made about representing women as daughters, sisters or mothers. Various minute details as to the words, gestures, actions and attitudes of women to their

1. उचिते वासके या तु रतिसम्भोगलालसा ।

मङ्गलं कुरुते हृष्टा सा वै वासकसज्जिता ॥

अनेक कार्यं व्यासङ्गाद् यस्या नागच्छति प्रियः ।

तस्यानुगमदुःखार्ता विरहोत्कण्ठिता मता ॥

सुरतातिरसैर्बद्धो यस्याः पार्श्वगतः प्रियः ।

सामोदे गुणसंयुक्ता भवेत् स्वाधीनभर्तृका ॥

ईर्ष्याकलहविक्रान्ती यस्या नागच्छति प्रियः ।

आमर्षवेषसंतप्ता कलहान्तरिता भवेत् ॥

व्यासङ्गादुचिते यस्याः नासकेनागतः प्रियः ।

तदनागमनार्ता तु खण्डितेत्यभिधीयते ॥

तस्माद्भूतां प्रियः प्राप्य गत्वा संकेतमेव वा ।

नागतः कारणेनेह विप्रलब्धा तु सा मता ॥

गुरुकार्यान्तरवशाद् यस्या विप्रोषितः प्रियः ।

सा रूढालककेशान्ता भवेत् प्रोषितभर्तृका ॥

हित्वा लज्जां समाकृष्टा मदेन मदनेन या ।

अभिसारयते कान्तं सा भवेदभिसारिका ॥ N. S. XXII. 5-212

lovers or husbands are given, and finally the warning is sounded to the actors that since the plays are to be witnessed by parents, children, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, they should be careful as to what is presented on the stage.¹

It is not possible for us to say definitely whether Bharata drew his conclusions from the contemporary dramas or not, because most of those dramas are not available to us. The few that are available, like the plays ascribed to Bhāsa, do not seem to agree with the rules laid down by the Nāṭyaśāstra. Even Kālidāsa does not seem to be much bothered about what is said in theory. It is much later, when creative genius seems to have come to a standstill, that we witness the servile following of rules and regulations by the playwrights. Hence we do have a variety of women characters to study in the actual plays, though their main part happens to be as the beloveds of the heroes.

The ten types of Rūpakas may be classified into two groups : one, full of soft, sweet and beautiful sentiments and emotions and actions suitable to them ; and the other, characterised by fights and chaotic conditions befitting the masculine elements. The Nāṭaka, Prakaraṇa, Bhāṇa, Aṅka and Vithī belong to the first group, and they, being of human interest, are to be acted with the help of women. The others, namely, Dima, Samavakāra, Vyāyoga and Ihā-mṛga are masculine and hard in nature. They are befitting the rākṣasas and asuras and are to be acted only by men. "Women should be completely left out",² says the master.

1. पितृपुत्रस्तृषाश्वशूहृष्यं यस्मात् नाना नाटकं ।

तस्मादेतानिसर्वाणि वर्जनीयानि यत्नतः ॥ N. S. XXII. 284-288

2. प्रयोगो द्विविधश्चैवं विज्ञेयो नाट्यमन्वितः ।

सुकुमारस्तयाविद्धो नानाभावरसाश्रयः ॥

नाटकश्च प्रकरणं भाणो वीथ्यङ्क एव च ।

यानि सुकुमाराणि मानुषैराश्रितानि तु ॥

द्विद्विता वेगकृता संरंभवहुलाश्च ये ।

In this connection, the natural question arises who acted the parts of women usually on the ancient stage. Bharata clearly states that men should represent the male characters and women the female characters as far as possible¹. He ordains that the actors should be chosen to suit the person and the character represented². Only if the properly qualified person is not available, a male may take the part of a female or vice-versa. In that case, the choice must be very carefully made, so that the features, voice and other things are as similar as possible to the character represented³. It is further stated in the Nāṭyaśāstra that the Nāṭya, in heaven, depended on the Apsarās and so, it should depend on terrestrial women in this world. The beautiful, soft and charming parts can be well acted only by women. Hence, the learned people should teach this art to the ladies in the harems of the kings and other suitable women, considering this also as a science worthy to be learned. In the

न ते स्त्रीभिः प्रयोक्तव्याः प्रयोज्याः पुरुषैर्हि ते ॥

... ..

डिमः सभवकारश्च व्यायोगेहामृगो तथा ।

एतासां विद्वसंज्ञानि विज्ञेयानि प्रयोक्तृभिः ॥

एषां प्रयोगः कर्तव्यो देवदानवराक्षसैः ।

उद्धता ये च पुरुषाः शौर्यवीर्यसमन्विताः ॥

N. S. XXXV. p. 653-54

1. स्त्रियस्तु स्त्री गते भावे पुरुषाः पौरुषे यथा ।

यथा वयस्तथा तस्मिन् अनुरूपेति सा स्मृता ॥ N. S. XXXV. p. 653

2. एवमन्येष्वपि तथा नाट्यधर्मी प्रशस्यते ।

देशवेषानुरूपेण पात्रं योज्यं हि भूमिषु ॥ N. S. XXXV. p. 652

3. पुरुषः स्त्रीगतं भावं यो वा प्रकुरुते पुनः ।

रूपानुसारिणी गेया प्रयोगे भरतोत्तमैः ॥

छन्दसः पौरुषीं कुर्यात् भूमिकां स्त्रीप्रयोगतः ।

... ..

स्त्रीषु योज्यः प्रयत्नेन प्रयोगः पुरुषाश्चयः ॥ N. S. XXXV. p. 653

palaces of kings, plays with Śṅgāra as the leading sentiment should be acted by women, because they have greater capacity to stage the plays properly due to their natural gifts of beauty and æsthetic efficiency¹. The musical voice and graceful movements of body are natural to women and this is an additional qualification for her to be an actor.²

These instructions are quite unequivocal and go to prove that women did participate in dramatic performances, in those days when Bharata wrote his book. Apart from this, in the legend about the creation of the Nāṭyaveda, a very interesting episode is found when Sātvatī, Bhārati, and Arabhaṭī Vṛttis were used to constitute the dramatic art, the preceptor of the Devas advised the sage to use the Kaisiki Vṛtti also to make it more beautiful and artistic. When this was done Bharata found himself in a difficult situation, because there was no one amongst his disciples who could reproduce this Vṛtti which had its source in the erotic sentiment and which was full of graceful movements of the body impregnated with soft and sweet sentiments. Then, he appealed to Brahmā who created the celestial women who were experts in the arts of dance and drama.³ This part of the story seems to establish the indispensability of women in the successful staging of plays.

1. भूमिकं सुकुमारं च नित्यं स्त्रीभिरनुष्ठितम् ।
अत्यर्थं मानुषीणान्तु दिव्यमानुषयोस्तथा ॥
रम्भोर्वशीप्रभृतिषु स्वर्गे नाट्यं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।
तथैव मानुषे लोके राज्ञामन्तः पुरेऽपि ॥
उपदेष्टव्यमर्थस्तु शास्त्रबुध्यांगतासु च ।
सुकुमार प्रयोगोज्यं राज्ञामामोदकारकः ॥
शृङ्गाररसमासाद्य तान्नारीष्वेव योजयेत् ।
भस्मात्स्वभावोपनतो विलासः स्त्रीषु दृश्यते ॥ N. S. XXXV. p. 653
2. संगीतकमपरिक्लेशो नित्यं प्रमदाजनस्य गुण एव ॥ N. S. XXXV. p. 653
3. भातीं सात्वतीं चैव वृत्तिमारभटीं तथा ।
साश्रितः प्रयोगस्तु प्रयुक्तो वै मया द्विजाः ॥

In the Vedic hymns there are descriptions of maidens who adorn themselves beautifully and enjoy themselves in singing and dancing. In the post-Vedic period also, music and dancing seem to have been encouraged among the girls. In the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, there are passages to suggest that girls were trained in fine arts such as music and dancing. As has been already stated, in the Rāmāyaṇa, there is a clear reference to women's dramatic companies¹. The heroines of the plays written during this period are shown to be well versed in these arts. There are references to plays actually enacted by women in the harems of the kings for the enjoyment of the royal audience. In the Vikramorvaśīya, the celestial women are said to have enacted the play Lakshmiṣwayaṃvara, written and directed by the sage Bharata. All these points go a long way to prove beyond any doubt, the custom of women participating in the staging of plays in the ancient days, when Sanskrit dramatic art was flourishing in its full glory. If this is so, there may not be anything wrong in assuming that women enjoyed an equal status, if not better, with men in society at the time when Bharata wrote, namely the first half of the first millennium

परिगृह्य प्रणम्याथ ब्रह्मा विज्ञापितो मया ।

अथाह मां सुरगुरुः कैशिकीमपि योजय ॥

यच्च तस्याः क्षमं द्रव्यं तद्ब्रूहि द्विजसत्तम ।

एवं तेनास्म्यमिहितः प्रयुक्तश्च मया प्रभुः ॥

दीयतां भगवन् ! द्रव्यं कैशिक्याः संप्रयोजकम् ।

नृत्ताङ्गहारसम्पन्ना रसभावक्रियात्मिका ॥

दृष्ट्वा मया भगवतो नीलकण्ठस्य नृत्यतः ।

कैशिकी रसक्षणनैपथ्या शृङ्गाररससम्भवा ॥

अशक्या पुरुषैः साधु प्रयोक्तुं स्त्रीजनादृते ।

ततोऽसृजन्महातेजा मनसाप्सरसो विभुः ॥

नाटयालङ्कारचतुराः प्रादान्मह्यं प्रयोगतः ॥ N. S. I, 4-47

1. वधूनाटकसंघैश्च संयुक्तां सर्वतः पुरीम् ।

उद्यानान्नवजोपेतां भहतीं सालमेखलाम् ॥ V. R. I. 5-21

of the Christian era.

It is not possible to ascertain how long this custom continued. The later dramas, specially those that came after Bhavabhūti, do not give any information as to this point. In the plays of Śrī Harṣa we have a play enacted in the harem of the king by the girls in attendance of the queen. But, in the *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti, it is plainly said by the Sūtradhāra and the Pāripāśvika, that they were preparing to take the parts of Kāmandakī and Avalokitā respectively. Within the same play we hear of Makaranda being disguised as Mālatī and getting married to Nandana in order to save Mālatī herself from the plight of marrying against her own wishes. From this time onwards, we see that women characters are lesser and lesser on the stage, and even those who are presented do not show much life. This clearly indicates that women had ceased to take part in the enacting of plays in public. We can still remember the days when it was considered something unbecoming for women to go to see a picture or a play to say nothing about participating in these. We may, perhaps, safely conclude that from the period when Bhavabhūti wrote, the seclusion of women became so pronounced that their appearing in public had become almost prohibited.

There are a good number of dramas available in print at present. Many more of the older works are still in manuscripts only. Many Sanskrit plays are being written in these days also. This treatise can in no way be called exhaustive as far as the Sanskrit plays are concerned, though care has been taken that all types of plays representative of the bulk of the entire collection are taken up for studying the women characters, whether actually presented on the stage, or referred to, as in the *Mudrārākṣasa*.

The authors of the earlier plays, quite true to their philosophical attitude towards life, have been indifferent about giving any information concerning themselves and their works in general. Quoting W. D. Whitney, Winternitz

says, "All dates given in Indian literary history are pins set up to be bowled down again." This statement is only too true about the Sanskrit dramas. The authors as well as their critics seem to be equally indifferent to preserve details about the writers as about their works. Hence, as we have already noticed, we are forced to resort to vague, and sometimes fantastic, conjectures even about the authorship of certain very fine pieces of literature representing our ancient culture. The utmost one can do under these circumstances is to guess at a relative chronology of the various authors up to the times of King Harṣavardhana, whose date has some historical data to support it.

Anyway, it may not be very wrong, if by drawing our own conclusions from the available dramas, we divide the older plays into three groups belonging to three periods, with the Master-poet Kālidāsa as the central figure, from whom we can look backwards and forwards. This would be most convenient for a close and critical study. In the first place, the main groups would fall into the following sub-groups—

1. Plays before Kālidāsa
2. The Plays of Kālidāsa
3. Plays after Kālidāsa

The last group being spread over a very long period, will have to be divided into further groups for the sake of convenience, and so, this last has been further divided into four sub-groups making Bhavabhūti and Jayadeva as land-marks in the course.

Accepting this division as the basis, we have attempted a critical, comparative and analytical study of the women-characters presented in these dramas. Incidentally, a comparative study of the same character by different authors at different periods, and also of different characters by the same author, has also been attempted. This has thrown much light on the ideas and ideals of society at the various periods.

Now, we pass on to the first group of the Sanskrit plays, those which were written before the Master-Poet Kālidāsa.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN IN THE PRE-KALIDASA PLAYS

When launching on a study of the women-characters depicted in the various Sanskrit plays, the first dramatist who attracts our attention is the great poet Bhāsa. As has already been said, the dramatic art had reached a high degree of development by the second century B. C. Though many plays might have been composed and staged, the only dramatists who are known to us, at least by name, are Bhāsa, Aśvaghōṣa and Śūdraka. Kālidāsa is the earliest of the dramatists who gives some information about himself or his predecessors, however meagre that may be. Such a reference, found in his *Mālavikāgnimitra*, first introduced Bhāsa to the later students. He refers to "Bhāsa, Saumilla, Kaviputra and others,"¹ as of great fame. But no work of these poets was available to posterity, till as late as the year 1912, when the thirteen plays collectively called as "the Trivandrum plays", were brought to light by Gaṇapati Śāstrī, who ascribed them to Bhāsa.

Of the thirteen plays ascribed to Bhāsa, only five are full dramas, whereas the others seem to be more like scenes taken from one or more full-fledged plays, adding a kind of stereotyped beginning and ending to them. Before going to the women-characters depicted in each, it would not be out

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1. पारिपाश्विकः—मा तावत् । प्रथितयशसां भाससौमिल्लकविपुत्रादीनां प्रवृत्तानतिक्रम्य वर्तमानकवेः कालिदासस्य क्रियायां कथं बहुमानः ।

of place to make a general survey of these plays and their peculiar characteristics as a back-ground for such a study. These thirteen plays can be divided into three groups on the basis of their sources : those based on the Rāmāyaṇa, those based on the Mahābhārata, and those based on the Bṛhatkathā. The Pratimā and the Abhiṣeka are the two plays which, together, tell the story of the Rāmāyaṇa up till the Yuddhakāṇḍa. The Pancarātra, the Dūtavākya, the Madhyama-Vyāyoga, the Dūtaghaṭotkaca the Karnaabhāra and the Ūrubhaṅga are based on the various incidents described in the last portion of the Mahābhārata; the Bālacarita is based on the Harivaṃśa, while the Pratiṇyāyugandharāyaṇa, the Svapnavāsavadattā, and the Chārudatta can trace their themes to the stories found in the Bṛhatkathā.

What appeal most to a student of these plays are the rapidity of action, directness of characterization, and simplicity of diction. There seems to be no consideration as to following or rejecting the rules of dramaturgy, as laid down by Bharata and others. But, all these plays seem to be bubbling with vigour and life. There is no lack of dramatic situations or actions. To quote a scholar on the subject—"It seems as if the roughness of the social life is reflected in the crudity of the plays. They are typical of the age in which they were written. They are virile, forceful and move with speed and determination."¹

The similarity of language, the use of identical stage-directions, repetitions of scenes, situations, expressions, ideas, verses, imagery, and the devices employed to show rapidity of actions—all point towards the conclusion that all these plays might have originated from the same brain. After heated discussions and strong controversies, the common authorship of these plays is more or less accepted by the scholars of to-day.

The date of Bhāsa is also a controversial point, though he is not unique in this. All evidences point to the prob-

1. R. V. Jagirdar : Drama in Sanskrit Literature; p. 8

ability of his having flourished somewhere between the third century B. C. and third century A. D. The historical references to persons and places and other internal evidences point towards the affinity of these plays to the age of the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, and the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya. The women-characters in general also show the characteristics of the same women as depicted in the source books, as we are to see presently. The Kings herein, are seen giving greater importance to Vedic sacrifices than those depicted by later authors. The social conditions, as found in these dramas, are almost the same as found in the earlier Smṛtis and also the epics. We find this more clearly when each play is taken individually for a critical study with special reference to the female characters.

Taking up the two plays dealing with the story of Rāma and Sitā, we find a few very noteworthy points. The Pratimā Nāṭaka deals with the story told in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, the Aranyakāṇḍa and the portion of the Yuddhakāṇḍa relating to the coronation of Rāma. And the Abhiṣeka. Nāṭaka seems to complete the threads cut out in between. These two dramas, taken together, seem to tell the complete story of the Rāmāyaṇa, beginning from the exile of the prince. Thus, it is plain that the story treated by the poet comprises only the portion of the Rāmāyaṇa beginning with the Ayodhyākāṇḍa and ending with the Yuddhakāṇḍa. Perhaps these two were the first plays ever written on the basis of this story. The story of Rāma existed even before the Rāmāyaṇa was composed by the Adikavi. But those versions are not available and so Vālmiki's work has to be taken as the earliest on the story of Rāma.¹ Even here, there are evidences to show that, the first Rāmāyaṇa did not have either the Bālakāṇḍa or the Uttarakāṇḍa. This idea, put forth by other authors before, has been taken up by Camil Bulke and discussed at great length in his Rāmakathā. He has

1. Camil Bulke : Rāmakathā, Chap. II, p. 30.

proved the claim very effectively.¹ He accepts that the exile of Rāma, the abduction of Sītā and the consequent killing of Rāvaṇa can be naturally accepted as historical facts.² According to him, even the fire ordeal, which Sītā had to undergo, is a later interpolation. The story of Rāma and Sītā is found in the Aranya Parva of the Mahābhārata, and also in two subsequent parvas, the Droṇa and the Śāntiparvas. It is significant to note that here also the story includes only the portion from the exile of Rāma to his return and coronation at Ayodhyā. Another point to be noted is the absence of the mention of Urmilā throughout the Rāmāyaṇa, except in the Bālakāṇḍa. Not only this, there is a significant reference to Lakṣmaṇa as "unmarried."³ Both these points taken together seem to lead to the conclusion that in the first instance the marriage of Rāma alone was mentioned, and the dramatic marriage of all four brothers with the four sisters at Mithilā was a later interpolation. In the Pratimānātaka, where Sītā and the three queens are mentioned, no mention of the other princesses is found. The Śūrpanakhā episode also is missing in the play, as well as in the first nucleus of the Rāmāyaṇa. Perhaps all these points may be evidences to show that Bhāsa wrote at a period nearer to the first recension of the Rāmāyaṇa, and followed the trend as far as the main threads were concerned.

It is true, that there are many remarkable changes found in the course of development of the main story in the Pratimānātaka which enhances the poetic interest and also the dramatic effect. For example, Rāma is shown as departing to the forest without taking leave of Daśaratha personally. He asks Sumantra to drive the chariot soon so that there might not be any obstacle in his departure. "May

1. Camil Bulke : Rāma kathā, p. 120-123

2. Ibid p. 462

3. श्रीमानकृतदारश्च लक्ष्मणो नाम वीर्यवान् । V. R. III. 18. 13

the king see the place where we bowed down to him.”¹ Bharata is shown as coming to Ayodhyā alone and the news of his Father’s death is revealed to him by the sight of the statues in the ‘Pratimāgṛha’. Kaikeyī’s character is saved by the reference to the curse of the blind sage and laying emphasis on her intention to save the king from the sin of forgetting his word of honour. The amorous advances of Śūrpaṇakhā, in fact even the mention of Śūrpaṇakhā, are left out completely. The only reason Rāvaṇa gives for carrying off Sītā is his desire for revenge.² Perhaps, this suggests the custom of abducting women as booties of war, existing at the period when these dramas were staged. After the death of Jaṭāyu the story is cut short, and the scene is changed to Ayodhyā. Here, the character of Kaikeyī is cleared and Bharata with all his retinue goes out to the halting place of Rāma, and the coronation takes place there.

The plot of the Abhiṣeka nāṭaka covers the story contained in the Kiṣkindhā, Sundara and Yuddhakāṇḍas. Sītā and Tārā are the only women-characters worth mentioning in the play, whereas in the Pratimānāṭaka, Sītā, the three queens of Daśaratha, and a few maid servants are depicted. All these characters resemble their prototypes in the Rāmāyaṇa, thus perhaps pointing to the close vicinity of the times of the epic to these plays.

None of the women characters show an atmosphere of suppression or servility. The conversation between Rāma and Sītā, and also between the king and his queens, represents a society in which man and wife enjoyed equality of status, mutual respect and consideration founded upon true love. The conversations between Rāma and Sītā in the palace as

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1. रामः—गतेष्वस्मासु राजा नः शिरःस्थानानि पश्यतु । Pratimā. I. 31
 2. रावणः—एष भोः ।

नियतमनियतात्मा रूपमेतद् गृहीत्वा खरवधकृतवैरं राघवं वञ्चयित्वा ।
स्वपदपरिहीणां हव्यधारामिवाहं जनकनृपसुतां तां हर्तुकामः प्रयामि ॥

Pratimā. Act V. 7

well as in the forest are examples to the point. Rāma's observations of Sītā not wearing any ornaments and also his insistant opinion that she had removed them only recently, taken along with Sītā's anxiety to hide from him the truth that she had removed them in order to present to the maid-servant who brought the good news about the coronation of her husband, is eloquent enough to tell us how loving and considerate they both were to each other.¹ Seeing Sītā clothed in bark garments, Rāma also desires to try it on himself. What a natural and lovely picture of the young couple ! In the forest also the behaviour of Rāma and Sītā towards each other proves the respect and honour with which the men treated their women and also the equal status women enjoyed.²

When Bharata came to the forest, it was Sītā who was sent to welcome him. Sītā was like a mother to all the younger brothers of her husband. As Lakṣmaṇa starts to go to Bharata, Rāma stops him with the words : "Let herself go as a mother to welcome her son with eyes brimming with tears of happiness at the very thought of his advent."³ This was the noble relation between the sisters-in-law and the younger brothers-in-law. When Rāma is worried about performing the last rites of his father, Sītā gives the advice which shows her profound knowledge of the Śāstras and the methods of performing the various rites. She says, "Let Bharata do the

1. रामः—मैथिली किमर्थं विमुक्तालङ्कारासि ।

सीता—न तावत्, आबध्नामि ।

रामः—न खलु प्रत्यग्रावतारितैर्भूषणैर्भवितव्यम् । तथाहि—

कर्णो त्वरापहृतभूषणमूनपाशौ संप्रासिताभरणगौरतलौ च हस्तौ ।

एतानि चाभरणभारनतानि गात्रे स्थानानि नैव समतामुपयान्ति तावत् ॥

Pratimā. Act I. 8

2. Pratimā Act V.

3. रामः—इयं स्वयं गच्छतु मानहेतोर्मतिव भावं तनये निवेद्य ।

तुषारपूर्णोत्पलपत्रनेत्रा हर्षास्त्रमासारमिवोत्सृजन्ती ॥

Pratimā. Act IV. 13

'śrāddha', in great splendour. You perform the same according to your present position and ability with fruits and water".¹ The same idea is found in the Rāmāyaṇa also that every one should perform the rites of the dead according to one's own capacity and status in life.² The manes should be offered only what the performers of the rites themselves eat. There are many instances to show that the words of Sītā count a lot with Rāma. The place of the wife as the betterhalf of man is held up by the poet in this drama quite clearly.

Rāvaṇa is already aware of the chastity of Sītā. He is anxious to avoid touching her lest his Māyā may be recognized. In this connection he refers to Sītā as the shadow of Rāma, meaning thereby their interdependence³ and inseparability.

Thus, the position of women appears to be quite ennobling as depicted by the poet in these plays. The relationship between husband and wife seems to be one of mutual love, respect and understanding. The woman who causes harm to her husband is denounced even by her son. Bharata in his anger and sorrow openly declares that a woman who brings misery to her husband is no more worthy of honour even from her own sons.⁴ The position of mother was always very high in society. But, according to the changing times the wifely duties seem to become more and more emphasized, and this is perhaps an example to the point.

The veil had come to exist as a sign of nobility even in the epic age as could be seen from the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. But Rāma is heard asking Sītā to remove the same

1. सीता—आर्यपुत्र ! निवर्तयिष्यति श्राद्धं भरत ऋद्धया, अवस्थानुरूपं फलोदकेनाप्यार्यपुत्रः । एतत् तातस्य बहुमततरं भविष्यति । Pratimā. Act V. 13

2. इदं भुङ्क्व महाराज प्रीतो यदशना वयम् ।

यदन्नः पुरुषो भवति तदन्नास्तस्य देवताः ॥

V. R. II. 102-30

3. रावणः—अयि ! छायां परिहृत्य शरीरं न लंघयामि । Pratimā. Act V.

4. भरतः—लोकेऽपूर्वं स्थापयाम्येष धर्मं भर्तृद्रोहादस्तु माताप्यमाता ।

Pratimā. Act III. 18

just before departing to the forests, saying that there is nothing wrong in women's faces being exposed to the eyes of the public in particular circumstances.¹ This idea is almost a repetition of the verses found in the Rāmāyaṇa at two occasions.²

The references to dresses of different provinces are available in the Pratimānāṭaka. Bharata on his return journey to Ayodhyā, imagining all sorts of incidents that would happen when he reaches his paternal home, fears that Lakshmaṇa would laugh at his dress and his changed language.³

The manners and customs of the people as depicted in these dramas are to a great extent similar to those found in the Rāmāyaṇa. The position of women also does not seem to have deteriorated so much as at the time of Manusmṛiti or later days. The natural conclusion is that these plays must have come into existence at a time when women were still keeping their position as the real companions of their husbands, within the household at least.

Six of the thirteen plays are based on the incidents of the Mahābhārata, as has been noticed already. The ennobling delineation of characters and effective depiction of dramatic situations prove the touch of a masterhand beyond any doubt. The general trend of social life, ideas and ideals is

1. रामः—मैथिलि! अपनीयतामवगुण्ठनम् ।

भो भोः पौराः । शृण्वन्तु शृण्वन्तु भवन्तः ।

स्वैरं हि पश्यन्तु कलत्रमेतद् बाष्पाकुलाक्षैर्वदनैर्भवन्तः ।

निर्दोषदृश्या हि भवन्ति नार्यो यज्ञे विवाहे व्यसने वने च ॥

Pratimā Act I. 29

2. (1) या न शक्या पुरा द्रष्टुं भूतैराकाशगैरपि ।

तामद्य सीतां पश्यन्ति राजमार्गगता जनाः ॥

V. R. II. 33. 8

(2) व्यसनेषु च कृच्छ्रेषु न युद्धेषु स्वयंवरे ।

न क्रतौ न विवाहे च दर्शनं दुष्यति स्त्रियाः ॥ V. R. VI. 117. 27

3. भरत—परिहसितमिवात्मनस्तत्र पश्यामि वेषं च भाषां च सौमित्रिणा ।

Pratimā Act III. 3

easily traceable in these dramas. Of these six plays, the Pancarātra, the Dūtavākya and the Karnaabhāra do not present any female characters. The remaining three, namely, the Dūtaghaṭokaca, the Madhyama Vyāyoga and the Ūrubhaṅga are only one-act plays. The poet has taken the liberty to change the incidents and even the general characteristics of the characters to suit his dramatic purpose. At the same time it is quite obvious that he does not differ from the ideas propagated in the Mahābhārata itself.

Queen Gāndhārī and the Princess Duśśalā are presented in the Dūtaghaṭokaca. Both of them clearly prove their royal birth in their general behaviour, talks and movements. The few words uttered by Gāndhārī show her dignity and also prove her insight into situations and people. The same queen Gāndhārī of the Epic who told her son plainly, "Victory is there where there is dharma", is found in this play. The same firmness mingled with the same love for her sons, characterizes the Gāndhārī depicted by Bhāsa. Duśśalā, her daughter, seems to have as much foresight and understanding as her noble mother. The womenfolk of the Kauravas, as seen in the Mahābhārata, are more farsighted, brave, patient, though spirited and endowed with greater power of discretion and understanding. The same characteristics are shown by these women portrayed in the plays of Bhāsa also. It may not be wrong to say that this is a proof of the fact that women still held their ground by their own high and noble qualities, in spite of the deterioration traceable in their menfolk.

Though the lawgivers were making all sorts of rules and regulations in order to curb the spirit of the loving and courageous women, the Kṣatriyas did not care so much to follow them. The rules concerning the age of marriage, and education did not affect the Kṣatriya girls. But the re-marriage of widows and the custom of Niyoga were definitely dying out. There are numerous examples to show that the society did not look with favour on these customs, perhaps

because they were causing the degeneration of the social conditions in general. Widows had begun to be considered as inauspicious and they, perhaps, had separate costumes to distinguish them. In the *Dutaghaṭotkaca*, when the death of *Abhimanyu* is known and *Jayadratha* is found to be the cause of the same, *Duśśalā* in her misery due to her fears for the life of her husband, says that she also would go to *Uttarā* and console her. Asked the reason why, she answers, "I will go and tell her that I am also nearing that fate of taking the widow's garments like you very soon."¹ The veil is referred to as a mark of dignity for the women of royal families. *Duryodhana* is miserable, because his wives had to come to the open battlefield with uncovered heads.² Stray examples of *Satī* are also heard here and there. *Pauravi*, one of *Duryodhana*'s beloved wives, announces her determination to ascend the funeral pyre of her husband.³

The *Madhyama Vyāyoga* presents two women characters, the wife of *Keśavadāsa* and the mother of *Ghaṭōtkaca*, named *Hiḍimbā*. The Brahmin woman is more or less the prototype of the women belonging to the orthodox Brahmin families as seen even to this day—simple, loving and submissive to the husband. She offers her life to save her husband, because she knows that the only duty of a good woman is to live and die for her husband.⁴ *Hiḍimbā* also shows the same love and devotion for her husband *Bhīmasena*. She tells her son that *Bhīma* was even like God to her as well as to him.⁵ Though there are not many words said, still the ideals of this

1. दुःशला—एवं च भणिष्यामि—अथ कालिकं च ते वेषग्रहणमहमप्युपधारिष्यामीति । D. G. Act I.

2. राजा—यन्मे प्रकाशीकृतमूर्धजानि रणं प्रविष्टान्यवरोधनानि । Ū. Bh. 38

3. पौरवी—एककृतप्रवेशनिश्चया न रोदिमि । Ū. Bh. p. 504

4. ब्राह्मणी—आर्यं, मामैवम् । पतिमात्रधर्मिणी पतिव्रतेति नाम ।

गृहीतफलेनैतेन शरीरेणार्यं कुलं च रक्षितुमिच्छामि ॥

M. Vy. p. 425

5. हिडिम्बा—उन्मत्तक! दैवतं खल्वस्माकम् । तव च मम च । M. Vy. p. 436

so called Rākṣasī are in no way lower than those of the cultured Āryan women.

The custom of Niyoga—leverage—is vehemently questioned by Duryodhana, again and again, in the Dūtavākya. In the beginning itself Duryodhana asks, "How is it possible for my uncle to be the father of those who were born after he had become disabled to have children and how can they have any right to the kingdom that was his share?"¹ Kṛṣṇa retorts by asking how Dhṛtarāṣṭra could have a right to the kingdom of Vicitravīrya, since he was born of Vyāsa after the death of the former?² The discussions and arguments continue in the same strain, and finally Duryodhana stops them by saying, "There can be no relationship between the children of gods and the children of human beings. So why argue? Stop it."³ The whole of Mahābhārata shows by the various incidents the evil in this custom and Bhāsa was only portraying logically the idea that was gathering strength in society, at his time. Almost all the Kaurava leaders were children born of leverage: Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu, all sons of Pāṇḍu, Karna and others. Naturally, there was no love lost between these cousins who had actually no blood relationship with one another. The result was the complete destruction of the family by internal feuds, the only survivor being Parīkṣit, the posthumous son of Abhimanyu, who had a fully legitimate lineage from both sides. This child, who

1. दुर्योधनः—वने पितृव्यो मृगयाप्रसङ्गतः कृतापराधो मुनिशापमाप्तवान्
तदाप्रभृत्येव स दारनिस्पृहः परात्मजानां पितृतां कथं ब्रजेत् ।

D. Vā. 21.

2. वासुदेवः—पुराविदं भवन्तं पृच्छामि ।
विचित्रवीर्यो विषयी विपत्तिं क्षयेण यातः पुनरम्बिकायाम् ।
व्यासेन जातो घृतराष्ट्र एष लभेत राज्यं जनकः कथं ते ॥

D. Vā. 22.

3. दुर्योधनः—देवात्मजैर्मनुष्याणां कथं वा बन्धुता भवेत् ।
पितृपेषणमेतावत् पर्याप्तं छिद्यतां कथा ॥ D. Vā. 30

was alone, saved by Kṛiṣṇa, continued the dynasty later on. A perusal of the whole story in this light suggests the undesirability of this custom quite strongly. This adverse opinion of the society is echoed in the *Dutavākya*, which must have been written somewhere near this age or perhaps a little later.

In the plays which mainly deal with battles and killings, women-characters, naturally, do not find much place. Since five out of the six *Mahābhārata* plays deal with the incidents after the return of the Pāṇḍavas from their exile, there is very little scope for depicting women-characters. There is ample material which suggests growing seclusion of women and definite deterioration of their condition in society. In the *Pancarātra* when asked by the charioteer, "what should I describe of the captor of Abhimanyu, beauty or valour", Bhīṣma's answer is very significant. He says, "Women are known by their beauty, and men are known by their valour."¹

It was against the rules of etiquette to ask about the welfare of any woman other than one's own relatives. Abhimanyu gets enraged when Bṛhannalā asks him about the welfare of Subhadrā, his mother, and gives him a very spirited answer.² But, we do not find Ghaṭōtkaca raising any objection when Bhīma asks about the former's mother. Perhaps according to Bhāsa, the Rākṣasas did not care so much for formalities.

These plays are dotted with examples of the accepted superiority of the Brāhmaṇas. Ghaṭōtkaca, a Rākṣasa youth, was aware that Brāhmaṇas were not to be oppressed

1. सूतः—किमभिधास्यामि रूपं वा पराक्रमं वा ।

भीष्मः—रूपेण स्त्रियः कथ्यन्ते पराक्रमेण तु पुरुषाः ॥

P. Rā. Act III. p. 412

2. अभिमन्युः—कथं कथम् जननी नाम ?

किं भवान् धर्मराजो मे भीमसेनो घनञ्जयः ।

यन्मां पितृवदाक्रम्य स्त्रीगतां पृच्छसे कथाम् ॥

P. Rā. Act II. 48

He decided to kill the Brāhmaṇa boy only because his mother wanted human flesh and there was no one else available. And a mother's wish was to be fulfilled—Brāhmaṇa or no Brāhmaṇa.¹ The respect for the Brāhmaṇa and the reverence for the mother even disregarding the former, are both in keeping with the ordinance in the Manusmṛti. Bhīma later on asks Ghaṭōtkaca to release the Brāhmaṇa, for the Brāhmaṇas were not to be killed even if they were found guilty of the foulest sins². Still, he also appreciates the boy's devotion to his mother; and when Ghaṭōtkaca insists that he should satisfy his mother, Bhīma obliges him by offering himself in place of the Brāhmaṇa. The whole episode seems to support the ruling of Manu concerning the Brahmanas and the mother, the latter "a thousand times greater"³.

The manners and customs as depicted in these plays seem to be more or less similar to those in the earlier epics. But, the position of women seems to be on the path of descent, with restrictions on their freedom slowly setting in.

There is a peculiarity common to these six plays which is very obvious and which calls for some observation. Reading through them one does not feel that they are complete in themselves. They do not at all seem to be the finished products of a master hand, as the dramas based on the Rāmāyaṇa we have studied, or those other plays based on the story of Udayana, which we are to examine presently. These seem to be portions taken from various fulfilled dramas, to be

1. घटोत्कचः—जानामि सर्वत्र सदा च नाम द्विजोत्तमाः पूज्यतमाः पृथिव्याम् ।
अकार्यमेतच्च मयाद्य कार्यं मातुर्नियोगादपनीय शङ्काम् ॥

M. Vy. 9

2. भीमः—गुर्वपराधेऽवध्यत्वान्मुच्यतां द्विजसत्तमः ॥

M. Vy. p. 431

3. (आ) उपाध्यायान्दशाचार्य आचार्याणां शतं पिता ।
सहस्रं तु पितृन्माता गौरवेणातिरिच्यते ॥

Manu, II. 145

acted on some particular occasions. We are familiar with the practice of adapting one or two acts of a play to suit some entertainment programmes, with necessary adjustments for the particular stage. In this connection, we are reminded of the various plays found in the cosy south, in Kerala, which are actually adaptations of the Sanskrit plays used for performances in the temple yard by the Chākkyārs from very early times. In the course of discussions about the authenticity of these thirteen Trivandrum plays, learned scholars have drawn our attention to this point. For example, the story of the Rāmāyaṇa has been always an attraction for these Chākkyārs, and we have the story divided into eight sections, each one called an 'aṅka', such as Abhiṣe-kāṅka, Aṅgulīyāṅka etc. We also have similar stage versions of the plays such as the Āścaryachūḍāmaṇi, the Śak-untalā, the Ratnāvalī, the Subhadrā-Dhananjaya and others, used even to-day. It may be possible that these also are only such stage-adaptations of the original plays, which were lost to posterity, while these survived due to the constant use by the Chākkyārs. The similarity in their beginnings and conclusions, and also in other techniques employed, only strengthens this view.

Coming to the third group, we have the Cārudatta, the Avimāraka, the Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyaṇa, and the Svapna-vāsavadattā, all of which trace their source to the Brhat-kathā. Of these, the Cārudatta has given room to a lot of discussions and controversies due to its close resemblance with the first portion of Mṛcchakaṭika, a prakaraṇa ascribed to Śūdraka. Speaking in general, this is the only play among all the thirteen plays that does not show the one characteristic common to all the rest, namely, the theme constituting the loss and restoration of the throne to the hero. Here, in this drama, we are introduced to a completely different set of characters from those of all the other plays which deal with the kings and courts. This is a social play, in which we are brought face to face with courtesans,

Viṭas and Cēṭas. The two noble characters portrayed are Cārudatta who is repeatedly and rather obstinately called Daridra Cārudatta and Vasantasenā, the courtesan, who is so called only due to her birth and not by character or nature.

A close study of the *Mṛcchakaṭika* attracts our attention to the point that this play can be easily divided into two sections. As Ryder suggests, the former portion of the first act along with the last five acts of *Mṛcchakaṭika* can go to form a consistent and ingenious plot, while the remaining portion, i. e. the portion from the beginning of the latter half of the first act up to the end of the fourth, can go to make a light comedy. That is exactly what seems to have been done by the clever compiler, whoever that may be, in the composition of *Cārudattam* which is included in the thirteen plays and ascribed to Bhāsa.

The story told is about the love of Vasantasenā for Cārudatta, the persecution of the heroine by the king's brother-in-law, Śakāra, the love of Śarvilaka and Madanikā, the theft committed by Śarvilaka in the house of Cārudatta, and the restoration of the ornaments of Vasantasenā by the thief himself. The play ends with the heroine starting off to the hero's house abruptly. The signs of unskilful adaptation for the stage are very obvious in this case.

The only female characters represented here are Vasantasenā, the two maid-servants, Radanikā and Madanikā, belonging to the Master and Mistress respectively, and also the poor wife of Cārudatta who is love and loyalty personified. The times represented in this play seems to be when a slow prejudice was growing against the freedom women were enjoying. Courtesans had already come into existence to attract the men who were not satisfied with the company of the secluded and submissive wife within the harem. For the first time, we hear of the possibility of buying female beauty in the bazar. The Viṭa and Śakāra repeatedly describe that the duty of the courtesan is to please man without any discretion. At the same time, it is also clear that they them-

selves were not pleased with their lots, and there were women like Vasantasenā who cared for character and nobility more than wealth. The buying and selling of women as slaves and getting them freed by payment used to be the custom of the day as could be concluded from the position of Madanikā and the attempt of Śarvilaka to get her freed by paying her mistress. Manu refers to different kinds of slaves among whom those bought as slaves are also included.¹ Though this seems to be an abridged form of some bigger drama, the characters presented are all of a noble nature, specially the female ones. Even Vasantasenā and Madanikā who belong to the lower status in society, due to their being courtesans, show very high and noble qualities.

The Pratijñā Yaugandharāyaṇa and Svapnavāsavadattā are two plays based on the story of Udayana, the king of Kauśāmbī, who is called the Prince charming of the Indian legends. There are a number of romantic stories with him as the central figure. Both these plays trace their sources to the Br̥hatkathā of Guṇāḍhya. The first one treats of the capture of Udayana by the king of Siṃhala, the famous Pradyota Mahāsenā, and the successful vow of the Brāhmaṇa minister Yaugandharāyaṇa to get him released from the captivity. Actually the idea of Mahāsenā in making king Udayana a captive was to get the latter as the husband for his daughter, Vāsavadattā, though it is not made known to anybody by him. This aim also is fulfilled in the end, because when Udayana is rescued by the faithful minister Yaugandharāyaṇa, and devoted friend Vasantaka, the princess Vāsavadattā, who had fallen in love with Udayana, her music-teacher, also was carried away. The play ends with the marriage of the princess with Udayana, and the blessings given by the parents of Vāsavadattā.

The Svapnavāsavadattā is a sequence of the same story. Because king Udayana became too much engrossed in his

1. ध्वजाहृतो भक्तदासौ गृहजः क्रीतदन्त्रिमौ ।

पैत्रिको दण्डदासश्च सप्तेते दासयोनयः ॥

beloved wife, he lost all interest in the kingly duties, and consequently lost his kingdom. The Minister, Yaugandharāyaṇa, in coalition with the other ministers, and also in council with the queen herself, indulges in a plot in which the king is made to believe that Vāsavadattā is burnt to death. The marriage with Princess Padmāvatī of Magadha is then made possible, as a result of which the king gets back his kingdom. In the end, Vāsavadattā, who was all the time living under the protection of Padmāvatī in the guise of Avantikā is also returned to the king, and everything ends well. Though the story deals with Udayana as the hero, the leader of the actions in both the plays is Yaugandharāyaṇa; because king Udayana belonged to the *Sachivāyattasiddhi* type, and the one end and aim of the Brāhmaṇa minister was the prosperity and fame of his master.

The society represented in these plays shows the growing supremacy of the Brāhmaṇas. Respect to the Brāhmaṇas had become a second nature to the people. There seems to be peace and prosperity reigning in society. The quarrels between the various kings and the consequent battles were limited to the court-circles and the soldiers only. The family-life was not affected much. It was the duty of the ministers to look after the welfare of the state and people in the absence of the king.

The Varnadharma and the Āśramadharma were gradually taking root. The second Āśrama, namely the Gṛhasthāśrama, or the house-holder's life, was considered to be the asset of life in this world. Marriage was considered equally desirable for man and woman. But the marriage of girls had become compulsory. The queen Angāravatī wishes that her daughter may get married soon. At the same time she does not want to part with her. Mahāsena notices this plight of the mother and expresses it also.¹ The typical attitude of a father, who has a

1. राजा—अदत्तेत्यागता लज्जा दत्तेति व्यथितं मनः ।

धर्मस्नेहान्तरे न्यस्ता दुःखिताः खलु मातरः ॥ Pr. Yau. Act II. 7

grown up daughter of marriageable age, is portrayed in the king Mahāsenā.¹ The whole of the second act of the Prati-jñāyugandharāyaṇa gives us an idea as to the conception of the duties of the parents towards their daughters. Marriage seems to have been considered as the end and aim of their lives, as far as women were concerned. The parents tried their best to obtain a suitable bridegroom for their daughter, but the result was considered to be in the hands of God.² The qualities desired in a bridegroom were manifold. Of those courage and power were the most important, because women had indeed to be protected in all circumstances.³ The mothers were more anxious when their daughters attained the age of marriage, and the girls were to be consulted before the decision was taken.

Queen Angāravatī and the mother of Vatsarāja are rather contrast types to each other. The wife of Mahāsenā is a submissive and loving wife. But the mother of Udayana seems to be quite independent and efficient in all matters. She is capable enough even to give advice to the clever minister Yaugandharāyaṇa in matters of state in the absence of the king. Still it is also noticeable that both the queens were only shadows, as it were, of their husbands whether alive or dead. Angāravatī is respected and honoured by her husband Mahāsenā. She in her turn considers herself to be his most obedient servant.

The daughters were treated with love and consideration.

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1. राजा—अतिलोभाद्वरगुणानामतिस्नेहाच्च वासवदत्तायां
न शक्तोमि निश्चयं गन्तुम् ॥ Pr. Yau. Act II.
 2. राजा—कन्यायाः वरसम्पत्तिः पितुः प्रायः प्रयत्नतः ।
भाग्येषु शेषमायत्तं दृष्टपूर्वं न चान्यथा ॥ Pr. Yau. Act II. 5
 3. राजा—कुलं तावच्छ्लाघ्यम् प्रथममभिकाङ्क्षे हि मनसा ।
ततः सानुक्रोशं मृदुरपि गुणो ह्येष बलवान् ॥
ततो रूपे कान्तिं न खलु गुणतः स्त्रीजनभयात् ।
ततो वीर्योदग्रं न हि न परिपाल्या युवतयः ॥ Pr. Yau. Act II. 4

They were given some kind of education. But training in music and other fine arts alone seems to be considered necessary for the girls of noble families. The reference to Uttarā, the lady-teacher of music¹, points out the custom of women taking up teaching of fine arts as a profession. At the same time this kind of education could not have been common; for Mahāsena enquires of the queen, how did Vāsavadattā come to have a desire to learn the lute.

The whole conversation² gives an impression that the king as well as the queen were in no way anxious that their daughter should get trained in music, vocal or instrumental. And Mahāsena seems to be less willing to yield to his daughter's wishes. Even after he is asked to provide her with a teacher, he answers in an indifferent way, "Where is the necessity of a teacher for her now that she is about to be married? Now her husband will teach her."³ Perhaps, these were the trends of thought which finally led to the ruling of Manu that marriage shall be the initiation ceremony for girls, the husband her teacher and the household duties her sacrifices. The statements of Mahāsena, "Vāsavadattā has, in every way, reached the age which makes her capable of serving her parents-in-law's house"⁴ and "let her play now, when she can; this will not be possible in her father-in-law's house"⁵, indicate how the parents dreaded the fate of their

1 देवी—उत्तरायाः वैयालिक्याः सकाशे वीणां शिक्षितुं नारदीयां गतासीत् ।

Pr. Yau. Act II.

2 राजा—कथमुत्पन्नोऽस्या गांधर्वोऽभिलाषः ।

देवी—केनापि किलोद्धातेन काञ्चनमालां वीणायोग्यां कुर्वतीं प्रेक्ष्य शिक्षितुकामासीत् ।

राजा—सदृशं बाल्यस्य ।

Pr. Yau. Act II. p. 75

3 राजा—उपस्थितविवाहकालायाः किमिदानीमाचार्येण । पतिरेवैनां शिक्षयिष्यति ।

Pr. Yau. Act II. p. 76

4 राजा—सर्वथा स्वशुरपरिचरणसमर्थे वयसि वर्तते वासवदत्ता । Ibid.

5 क्रीडतु, क्रीडतु । नैतत् सुलभं स्वशुरकुले । Pr. Yau. Act II. p. 81

daughters in the houses of their parents-in-law. The sum and substance of all their thoughts about the bridegroom is given in the words of Angāravatī, "She should be given in such a place where we would not have to repent after giving."¹

Though the main concern of arranging the marriage of their daughters was that of the parents, the consent of the girls was sought in right earnest. In the *Svapnavāsavadattā*, the maidservant tells Avantikā that though the king Pradyota was anxious to make Padmāvatī his daughter-in-law, the princess herself did not favour the idea.² The marriages in the royal families were not necessarily intended for the perpetuation of the race; nor were they necessarily caused by love. Instead they were more often brought about in order to fulfil some political motives. Both the marriages of Udayana described in the respective dramas are evidences to this point. The reason why Mahāsena was anxious to get Vatsarāja as prisoner is that though the former had become all-powerful, the proud Udayana did not bow his head before him.³ If, therefore, that king was captured and made to accept his daughter's hand, Mahāsena would have no rival in the political arena.

The whole plot of *Svapnavāsavadattā* centres round the conspiracy of Yaugandharāyaṇa motivated by his desire to make his king a sovereign lord on earth. In fact, two motives appear to govern the plot of this play, political as well as psychological, with the clever brains of Yaugandharāyaṇa

1. देवी—किमिदानीं विस्तरेण । यत्र दत्त्वा न सन्तप्यामहे तत्र दीयताम् ।

Pr. Yau. Act II. p. 76

2. चेटी—भर्तृदारिका तेन राज्ञा सह सम्बन्धं नैच्छति ।

Sv. Va. Act II. p. 14

3. राजा—मम हयखुरभिन्नं मार्गरेणुं नरेन्द्रा

मुकुटतटविलग्नं भृत्यभूता वहन्ति ।

न च मम परितोषो यन्त मां वत्सराजः

प्रणमति गुणशाली कुञ्जरज्ञानहृत् ।

Pr. Yau. Act II. 3

working behind the scenes all the time. The play is concerned with two restorations, the restoration of Udayana to his throne and of Vāsavadattā to her husband, the separation of the king and his beloved queen itself being the doing of the minister to achieve the political motive. The king was getting negligent about the affairs of the state due to his attachment to the newly wedded queen, and this had resulted in the loss of his kingdom. The alliance with Darśaka, the brother of the princess Padmāvati, was one sure way by which Udayana could regain his kingdom. So, Yaugandharāyaṇa hatched the plot, with this motive in his mind. In this drama, we find that the political motive works in the background while the main picture depicts a series of domestic events.

These plays point to a period when various small kingdoms existed, and when one king or another secured supremacy over the others according to his strength or strategy. To achieve this end, military alliances were secured by marriage alliances. Udayana, according to a modern writer, is the Prince Arthur of the Indian legends. His romance and love adventures were made use of by his ambitious minister Yaugandharāyaṇa in securing alliances with almost all the powerful kings of his time.

Marriages by mutual love, the Gāndharva type, and that by capture, the Rākṣasa type, were accepted as legal among the Kṣatriyas at about the period after 400 B.C. The carrying away of the daughter of Pradyota by Vatsarāja, though by mutual consent, was accepted by the parents of the princess. But they would not leave it at that. They considered it necessary to perform the marriage ritual in the approved manner, keeping at least the portraits of the bride and bridegroom in their places. Perhaps, this is an indication of the fact that the Gāndharva type of marriage was slowly outgrowing its time and the proper marriage ceremony performed by the parents was necessary to get the approval of the society.

Polygamy was not unknown then. Udayana testifies to this fact when he inquires about the welfare of his mother-in-law from Vasundharā in the Svapnavāsavadattā.¹ Still it does not seem to have become the custom of the day. People seem to have scruples about marrying again while the first wife is alive. Udayana, though very romantic by nature, would not dream of marrying a second time, with Vāsavadattā by his side. Neither would king Darśaka give his sister in marriage to a person who has a wife living already. That is why Vāsavadattā had to be removed from the scene, before such a marriage could even be contemplated. Of course, Yaugandharāyaṇa could easily win over the queen to do any thing in her power to secure the prosperity and welfare of her husband. And thus the queen Vāsavadattā became dead, for all practical purposes, though she was living and witnessing everything that happened in Udayana's court. Even so, it is seen that the king as well as Padmāvatī were very careful not to hurt each other by any unwelcome words or deeds.² Further they both are equally anxious not to give any cause of grievance to the relations of Vāsavadattā also.³

The way in which queen Angāravatī, in the Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa, and Padmāvatī, in the Svapnavāsavadattā, stand up to go away at the announcement of strangers, perhaps suggests that the appearance of women in public freely was not considered laudable in that period. It is plain

1. राजा—षोडशान्तःपुरज्येष्ठा पुण्या नगरदेवता ।

मम प्रवासदुःखार्ता माता कुशलिनी ननु ॥ Sv. Va. Act VI. 9

2. राजा—(आत्मगतम्)

इयं बाला नवोद्वाहा सत्यं श्रुत्वा व्यथां व्रजेत् ।

कामं धीरस्वभावेयं स्त्रीस्वभावस्तु कातरः ॥ Sv. Va. Act. IV. 8

पद्मावती—आर्यपुत्रस्यापरः परिग्रहः इत्युदासीनमिव भवति ।

Sv. Va. VI. p. 47

3. पद्मावती—आर्यपुत्र ! तातो वाम्बा वा किं नु खलु भणिष्यतीत्याविग्नेव संवृत्ता ।

Sv. Va. VI. p. 48

from the contexts quoted, that noble women were not expected to expose themselves to public gaze and only on special occasions, when desired by their husbands, they remained with the latter to meet any one from outside. At the same time there seems to be another aspect of the question. If women retired from the presence of honoured guests or relatives, it might be taken as an insult by the latter. While the messengers from Mahāsena were announced, and Padmāvati wished to retire, Udayana reminded her that they might take it amiss that she retired from their presence.¹

The Brahmachārī who comes to the penance grove hesitates to enter, because he saw Vāsavadattā there in disguise. His words "Oh ! there are women !"² perhaps indicate that men were not expected to enter the places frequented by women. But it may also be noted that all these rules apply only to married women. Maidens, and women retired to the penance groves, were not forbidden to be seen by men. For example, neither Vāsavadattā nor Padmāvati was in seclusion before her marriage. Vāsavadattā was seen by Udayana from his prison-house while she was visiting the Yakshī temple for worship in an open palanquin.³ And Padmāvati, when she went to the penance grove, was accessible to every one.

Married women perhaps had to follow a set code of behaviour. The character of women was so jealously guarded in those days that it was very necessary to keep them above suspicion. It seems to be a purposeful device of Yaugandharāyaṇa

1. राजा—कलत्रदर्शनाहं जनं कलत्रदर्शनात् परिहरतीति बहुदोषमुत्पादयति ।
तस्मादास्यताम् । Sv. Va. Act VI. p. 48
2. ब्रह्मचारी—अये स्त्रीजनः । Sv. Va. Act I. p. 8
3. विदूषकः—या सा कालाष्टमी अतिक्रान्ता, तस्यां तत्रभवती वासवदत्ता नाम राजदारिका घात्रीद्वितीया कन्यकादर्शनं निर्दोषमिति कृत्वापनीत-
कञ्चुकायां शिविकायां अवघट्टितप्रणालीप्रसृतसलिलविषमं राजमार्गं
परिहृत्य यत्तद् बंधनद्वारस्याग्रतो भगवत्या यक्षिण्याः स्थानं, तस्मिन्
देवकार्यं कर्तुं गतासीत् । Pr. Yau. Act III. p. 91

that he kept Vāsavadattā in the keeping of Padmāvatī, whom he was planning to make Udayana's wife in the very near future. This is proved by his own words to Padmāvatī at the beginning,¹ and in another place as a soliloquy.² Women who were separated from their husbands were expected to lead a very simple life. Avantikā's life in the palace of Udayana by the side of Padmāvatī is a good example. She seems to follow the rules laid down by Yājñavalkya³ to the letter. This ideal life of hers is later on testified by Padmāvatī herself.⁴ Generally, the women of the royal family lived within the inner apartments strictly guarded by the Chamberlain. The manner and formalities to be observed within the harem—the "antaḥpura samudācāra"—are emphasised in all the thirteen Trivandrum plays. To be well beloved by her husband was the greatest good fortune that any woman could be blessed with. The words of the Brahmacārī concerning Vāsavadattā are quite noteworthy in this connection. He says, "that woman is indeed fortunate whom her husband considers thus; she is really not dead though burnt, as she is so well loved by her husband."⁵

In both these dramas, there are references to the separate modes of dresses for different provinces. Vāsavadattā

1. यौगन्धरायणः—धीरा कन्येयं दृष्टधर्मप्रचारा शक्ता चारित्रं रक्षितुं मे भगिन्याः ॥
Sv. Va. Act I. 9

2. यौगन्धरायणः—(आत्मगतम्) ततः प्रतिष्ठिते स्वामिनि तत्रभवतीमुपनयतो मे इहाश्रभवती मगधराजपुत्री विश्वासस्थानं भविष्यति ॥
Sv. Va. Act I. p. 7

3. क्रीडां शरीरसंस्कारं समाजोत्सवदर्शनं ।

हास्यं परगृहे यानं त्यजेत् प्रोषितभर्तृका ॥ Yājñavalkya S. IV. 84

4. पद्मावती—प्रोषितभर्तृका परपुरुषदर्शनं परिहरति ॥
Sv. Va. Act VI. p. 52

5. ब्रह्मचारी—नैवेदानीं तादृशाश्चक्रवाका नैवाप्यन्ये स्त्रीविशेषैर्वियुक्ताः ।

धन्या सा स्त्री यां तथा वेत्ति भर्ता भर्तृस्नेहात् सा हि दग्धाप्यदग्धा ॥
Sv. Va. Act. I. 13

in the disguise of Āvantikā is described in the stage direction as "one who is dressed according to the custom of Avanti," or *Avanti-veṣadhāriṇī*.

Nothing is heard about the education of women in this period more than what we have already noted in these pages, though education among men seems to have been of quite a high standard. We see here that women also retired to the forest in their old age and their relatives came to pay respects to them off and on. Peace and contentment seem to have reigned over those places of retirement. The respect towards Brahmanas seems to be on the ascendance. Still, there is nothing to suggest that the social classes had bound themselves down within the hard walls of caste system.

Belief in fate, rebirth and reaping the fruits of one's own deeds appears to have got a strong hold on the minds of the people. The words of prophets and sages were held as gospel truths. Such beliefs were so strong that clever and intelligent people like Yaugandharāyaṇa allowed their whole plans concerning even the welfare of the kings and the countries to be influenced by those prophecies. It is because some *siddhas* prophesied that Padmāvatī was destined to be Udayana's wife that he dared to go to the extent of proclaiming the queen herself to be dead¹.

Apart from Padmāvatī, Vāsavadattā and the two queen-mothers, the other female characters portrayed in these two plays are only ordinary characters necessary to carry on the dramatic representation smoothly. They have nothing special to tell the student about the contemporary society or the women in particular.

1. योगन्धरायणः—(आत्मगतम्)

पद्मावती नरपतेर्महिषी भवित्री

दृष्ट्वा विपत्तिरथ येः प्रथमं प्रदिष्टा ।

तत्प्रत्ययात् कृतमिदं न हि सिद्धवाक्या-

न्युत्क्रम्य गच्छति विधिः सुपरीक्षितानि ॥

Sv. Vā. Act I. 11

Passing on to the Avimāraka, the third play which traces its source to the Bṛhatkathā, we meet with quite a different atmosphere. There is a vast difference between the two Udayana plays and this drama with a *Vidyādhara* prince as its hero. It is filled with fanciful and fantastic ideas. Though intended to be a play, it appears more to be a narration with suitable actions and gesticulations. The introduction of supernatural influences also has reduced its value and interest as a dramatic piece of art.

This being the case, it is only natural that we are not able to gather much useful information as to the existing social conditions or any other details. The aim of this play seems to be nothing more than to give the audience a little enjoyment and surprise. The entrance of Nārada and his presenting the ring with magical powers to Avimāraka, and similar incidents, do give momentary enjoyment mingled with wonder to the people. But we miss in this drama the impressive and admirable dramatic technique and the natural delineation of characters found in the other two plays.

The eagerness of the parents to get their daughter married is clear in this play also. The possibility for the young prince Avimāraka to enter the apartments of the maiden princess, his being able to live there with her for more than one year, the handing over of her son by Sudarśanā to the queen of Sauvīrarāja and similar other incidents reflect a condition of society in which the actions of women were unscrupulous and untrustworthy. Such portrayals of women could only help the growing suspicion and bad feelings against women which seem to have taken root in the society about this period. We have already noticed that in this period, there were two definitely opposite trends of thought traceable in society—one supporting women and the other denouncing them as doors to hell. This particular play may be a pointer towards that trend of thought which was being propagated by those who were out to discredit women. Bhāsa was not a person who looked down upon women.

Nor are women denounced in any other of the plays ascribed to him. The light mood, the abundance of supernatural powers used in it, and the inferior technique traceable in this play make two conclusions possible: either this drama is the work of some other poet who held adverse opinions about women, or Bhāsa himself wrote this in an adverse way with the intention of ridiculing those who exaggerated the evil as attributed to women, and to please an audience, which was neither capable of, nor interested in, understanding the deeper meaning of life or real dramatic art and technique, but was only eager to witness some strange and miraculous spectacles.

The *Bālacarita*, based on the story of Kṛṣṇa, as found in the *Harivaṁśa*, retells the story of Kṛṣṇa's childhood in a very effective and attractive way. The only female characters presented are Devakī and the girls of Gokula. All the characters as depicted in this play are almost the prototypes of the same characters as found in the *Harivaṁśa* or the *Bhāgavata*. There may not be anything wrong in concluding that these represent the simple folk of the society the poet saw.

There is another play called the *Yajñaphala*, recently published and ascribed to Bhāsa. This deals with the story contained in the *Bālakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It describes the advent of the sage Viśvāmitra to take Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to the forest, the killing of the Rākṣasas by the princes, their going to Mithilā, the meeting of Sītā and Rāma, their love at first sight, and then the final scene of the happy union of the couple. Even a rapid reading of the text is enough to convince us about the absurdity of ascribing this play to the great poet. There is no similarity whatever between the Trivandrum plays and this newly published play in plot-construction, delineation of characters, scenes, imageries, or even language and diction. The scenes of love between Rāma and Sītā described in this play are, to say the least, jarring to those who are accustomed to hear of this ideal

couple of India in the language of Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. In these scenes, we are able to trace the shadows of the first three acts of the *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam*, though these are only an apology to an imitation when one goes diving deeper into the text. These and other internal evidences point clearly to a later date and crude intellect of the anonymous poet who has taken the trouble of adding one more number to the innumerable stereotyped dramas existing in Sanskrit literature.

The female characters depicted in this play are Sītā and her friends who are really poor imitations of the princesses and their friends found in the romantic plays of the poets after Kālidāsa. The love-sick condition of the hero and the heroine alone has been attractive to this poet, whoever he may be. There is nothing worthy of notice about the female characters depicted herein.

Another poet who wrote in this period is Aśvaghoṣa. Up till the last part of the 19th century, Aśvaghoṣa was only a name to the Sanskrit scholars. But, now, many important works of this great poet have come to light, and scholars have found enough evidence to consider him as a poet who wrote much earlier than Kālidāsa. The *Sāriputra Prakaraṇa* is a drama ascribed to this poet. There is another allegorical drama also recovered and published recently.

Dr. De, in his treatise on Sanskrit dramatic literature, says, "Aśvaghoṣa is a poet by nature, a highly cultured man by training, and a deeply religious devotee by conviction"¹ He was a Buddhist and his works are mostly religious, eulogizing Buddha or Buddhism. The colophon found at the end of the third act of the *Sāriputra Prakaraṇa* helps us with the name of the work, as well as of the author, beyond any doubt. This play is found only in fragments. But they afford clear testimony to the fact that Sanskrit drama

1. De and Dasgupta : History of Sanskrit Literature; p. 147

possessed a fairly developed technique at the time when this poet was writing. In these fragments, no mention of women characters is found, and so we have to be silent as far as our particular subject of study is concerned.

Śudraka's *Mṛcchakaṭika* is another earliest play that attracts our attention and holds it by the various interesting women-characters. In the long and varied history of Sanskrit dramas, this play occupies a unique place. It is a *prakaraṇa*, and in the prologue itself the whole life-history of Śudraka, the author, is given.¹ But the very construction of the statement in the past perfect tense causes confusion in doubting minds. There is actually no definite information about the author, apart from what is found in the above-mentioned prologue. Some scholars go to the extent of even dismissing this very name as fictitious and ascribe this play to a poet of much later date—Dandin. But there is no more reason to disbelieve the information given in this prologue than to believe the story that *Mṛcchakaṭika* is an expanded form of *Cārudatta*, ascribed to Bhāsa. There is a king Śudraka referred to in the *Padmapurāṇa*, and there are other reasons to accept this king as the author of this Sanskrit play, which shows more dramatic effect and utility on the stage than any other drama belonging to that early period.

In any case, there is nothing to hinder us from making a close study of the female characters depicted in this play,

1. सूत्रधार :—एतत्कविः किल—

द्विरदेन्द्रगतिश्चकोरनेत्रः परिपूर्णोन्दुमुखः सुविग्रहश्च ।
 द्विजमुख्यतमः कविर्बभूव प्रथितः शूद्रक इत्यगाधसत्त्वः ॥
 ऋग्वेदं सामवेदं गणितमथकलां वैशिकीं हस्तिशिक्षां
 ज्ञात्वा शर्वप्रसादाद्वचपगततिमरे चक्षुषी चोपलभ्य ।
 राजानं वीक्ष्य पुत्रं परमसमुदयेनाश्रमेघेन चेष्टा
 लब्ध्वा चायुः शताब्दं दशदिनसहितं शूद्रकोऽग्निं प्रविष्टः ॥

Mṛcch. Act I. 3-4

which at every step provides us with evidences of a masterly imagination and intellect at work. This play presents before us a variety of women-characters, the Brāhmaṇa wife and the courtesan, the servant-maid of a noble lineage and also the women of lower character. Not only this, there are very interesting characters drawn from all grades of society—from the virtuous Brāhmaṇī to the old courtesan well-versed in the art of money-making; from the high souled Brāhmaṇa to the daring thief: all of them giving an impression of individuals with life and action, with diversified interests. The scene is set in the cosmopolitan city Ujjayinī and, as the prologue itself testifies, portrays a graphic picture of the contemporary society.¹

Mṛcchakaṭika belongs to the type called *prakarana*.² According to the dramaturgists, the plot should be the invention of the poet, based on the general life of the people; the hero should belong to the *dhīraprasānta* type, and must be a Brāhmaṇa or merchant or minister; the heroine can be either a noble-born woman or a courtesan; and love should be the main sentiment. We cannot say that

1. सूत्रधार :—अस्यां च तत्कृतौ

अवन्तिपुर्यां द्विजसार्थवाहो युवा दरिद्रः किल चारुदत्तः ।
गुणानुरक्ता गणिका च यस्य वसन्तशोभेव वसन्तसेना ॥
तयोरिदं सत्सुरतोत्सवाश्रयं नयप्रचारं व्यवहारदुष्टताम् ।
खलस्वभावं भवितव्यतां तथा चकार सर्वं किल शूद्रको नृपः ॥

Mṛcch. Act I. 6-7

2. (अ) आत्मशक्त्या कविर्यत्र कथां नायकमेव च ।

श्रौत्पत्तिकं प्रकुर्वते तद्वि प्रकरणं विदुः ॥

द्विधा प्रकरणं तत्तु शुद्धं संकीर्णमेव च ।

कुलस्त्रीचरितं शुद्धं संकीर्णं वेश्यया कृतं ॥ N. S. XXXV.

(आ) भवेत्प्रकरणे वृत्तं लौकिकं कविकल्पितम् ॥

शृङ्गारोऽङ्गी नायकस्तु विप्रोऽमात्योऽथवा वणिक् ।

सापायधर्मकामार्थपरो

धीरप्रशान्तकः ॥

S. D. VI. 224-225

this drama fulfils all the requirements of the rules, nor can it be said that it does not. The theme of this play is as curious as its title. For the first time we come across a hero who belongs to the class of the ordinary human beings. We are able to forget the kings and queens and the royal atmosphere to come down to the ordinary and natural life of the real world. As we read through this play, we come to have a feeling of descending, as it were, to the firm rock of grim reality, from the flowery path constituted of poetry and imagination alone.

The idea of a courtesan in love with a Brāhmaṇa is found in the story of Rūpaṇikā in the Bṛhatkathā. The original work of Guṇādhya is lost to us, but the Kathāsaritsāgara gives us the stories faithfully to the original. There we get a reference to the courtesan being advised by her mother not to get herself entangled with a poor man.¹ If at all the original of this had served as the source for Śudraka, he has taken only the skeleton, and having supplied flesh and blood, he has also injected new life into it.

The Mṛcchakaṭika is a most enjoyable drama, as a literary piece as well as a piece on the stage. In this drama, it seems that all the three aims of a play as given by Bharata are fulfilled. Among the hundreds of stereotyped plays in Sanskrit, this play reveals to us quite a different and pleasant atmosphere. There is such a variety of incidents occurring close upon one another, almost at a breakneck speed, acting and reacting on one another, but steadily leading up to the final goal. The skilful combining of the love-story with the political events is simply marvellous.

1. किमयं पुरुषः पुत्रि, निर्धनः सेव्यते त्वया ।
 शवं स्पृशन्ति सुजना गणिका न तु निर्धनं ॥
 कानुरागः क वेस्यात्वं इति ते विस्मृतं कथं ।
 सन्ध्येव रागिणी वेस्या न चिरं पुत्रि दीप्यते ॥
 नटीव कृत्रिमं प्रेम गणिकास्यायि दशयेत् ।
 तदेनं निर्धनं मुख मा कृथा नाशमात्मनः ॥ Kathā. S. 12

The delineation of the varied and innumerable characters is extraordinarily successful. None of them is a mere ideal or a slavish image. Most of them are faced with the dark side of life, but they seem to go undaunted on their onward march with a resolute and philosophical smile on their lips. Even thieving and gambling are portrayed as fine arts. The philosophy of life even from the mouth of the executioners¹ and slaves² is quite significant, in so far as these point to the ideas current in the contemporary society. The atmosphere of the *Mṛcchakatika* breathes of a time when the highest philosophy of life was being moulded. The path of action, the *karma mārga*, was to be followed without any consideration for the results or the future. Even the lowest characters seem to be permeated with the spirit of Indian culture, with its ideas of life after death, and also the doctrine of *karma*. This play seems to give us a fair picture of the contemporary Indian society in its various aspects. It will not be out of place to survey the society in general, here, before taking up the women-characters depicted in this play.

Ujjayinī is described as a gay, prosperous city which attracted various people from different countries. *Saṁvāhaka* and *Śarvilaka* are two examples. Inland and maritime trade seems to be in a flourishing condition. There are many merchant millionaires, equally prosperous and charitably minded. The town was enlivened by rich courtesans who had their own ideas of right and wrong, and who dared to act

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1. चाण्डालः—आर्यचारुदत्त ! गगनतले प्रतिवसन्तौ चन्द्रसूर्यावपि विपत्तिं लभेते । किं पुनर्जना मरणभीरुका मानवा वा । लोके कोऽप्युत्थितः पतति कोऽपि पतितोऽप्युत्तिष्ठते ।

Mṛcch. Act X.

2. चेटः—ताडयतु भट्टकः मारयतु भट्टकः अकार्यं न करिष्यामि ।
येनास्मि गर्भदासो विनिर्मितो भागधेयदोषैः ।
अधिकं च न क्लेष्यामि तेनाकार्यं परिहरामि ॥

Mṛcch. Act VIII. 25.

according to their convictions. They seem to be cultured enough to realise the noble qualities in people and court them in spite of sure troubles and even death. Gambling also seems to have rules to regulate it. The four castes are known by name. But the supremacy of the priestly class does not seem to have taken root in the soil. The change of professions among castes does not seem to be any thing unusual. The Brāhmaṇa Cārudatta is a merchant by profession. Another Brāhmaṇa uses his brains to become an expert in the art of theft. Viraka and Candanaka, barber and shoemaker respectively by birth, are seen holding responsible positions in the defence department of the Government. Again and again it is heard that family or birth does not count. What really matters is character.¹ For, even in a fertile field it is quite possible that thorn-trees grow in abundance. Slavery was in vogue, but it was possible to get the slaves freed by payment of money to the master or the mistress. There are two cases to illustrate this custom in the play : one of Madanikā, who was released by generous-hearted Vasantasenā, and the other of Sthāvaraka who was set free by the order of Āryaka, the new king. We have already noticed that the custom of buying and selling servants was existent in the Āryan society, and is recorded in the Manusmṛti also.² The king had the power to change the position of a person, as is testified by the numerous orders of Āryaka which were carried out by Śarvilaka in the tenth act of this play. Vasantasenā being given the position of a woman of noble lineage and also the freedom granted to Sthāvaraka are examples to the point.

1. किं कुलेनोपदिष्टेन शीलमेवात्र कारणम् ।

भवन्ति सुतरां स्फीताः सुक्षेत्रे कण्टकिद्रुमाः ॥

Mrcch. Act VIII. 29 and Act IX. 7.

2. ध्वजाहृतो भक्तदासो गृहजः क्रीतद्विप्रौ ।

पैत्रिको दण्डदासश्च सप्तैते दासयोनयः ॥ Manu. VIII. 415.

All the conditions described or indicated in this play point to a time which was very near to the 2nd century, A. D. The judicial system as represented in the play at the trial of Cārudatta¹ and also the contention of his that he should have been tried by means of ordeals before finally condemning him to death,² shows the author's knowledge of the system of law as expounded by Yājñavalkya. The reference to Pālaka as beginning the Yajña and his being killed in the Yajñaśālā,³ are indications to show that Vedic sacrifices were still in vogue. The handing over of the sacred thread by Cārudatta to his son as the last present⁴ also shows that the sacredness of the same was held high among the people at the time.

Even as the male characters, so also the female characters portrayed by Śudraka are all true to nature, with individualities of their own. Vasantasenā, the heroine, Dhūtā, the wife of the hero Cārudatta, Madanikā and Radanikā, the respective maid-servants of the heroine and the hero, and the old mother of Vasantasenā are the main female characters who attract our attention. Though a courtesan

1. Mṛcch. Act IX.

2. चारुदत्तः—विषसलिलतुलाग्निप्राथिते मे विचारं
 क्रकचमिह शरीरे वीक्ष्य दातव्यमद्य ।
 अथ रिपुवचनाद्वा ब्राह्मणं मां निहंसि
 पतसि नरकमध्ये पुत्रपौत्रैः समेतः ॥

Mṛcch. Act IX. 43

3. शविलकः—पशुवद्यज्ञवाटस्थो दुरात्मा पालको हतः ॥

Mṛcch. Act X. 51

4. चारुदत्तः—किं पुत्राय प्रयच्छामि । (आत्मानमवलोक्य यज्ञोपवीतं दृष्ट्वा)
 आं इदं तावदस्ति मम च ।

अमौक्तिकमसौवर्णं ब्राह्मणानां विभूषणम् ।

देवतानां पितृणां च भागो येन प्रदीयते ॥

Mṛcch. Act X. 18

by birth and breeding, Vasantasenā stands out as a noble and good Hindu woman to be honoured and loved. No other heroine in the Sanskrit literature is able to produce a permanent impression on the mind as this famous courtesan of Ujjayinī. She has neither the girlish charm of Śakuntalā, nor the mature womanly dignity of Dhārīṇī. Witty and wise, disillusioned and sophisticated, she has seen much of a sordid world. Yet, she has a heart for romance. She is introduced on the stage as a courtesan, and makes her exist as a noble lady, the wedded wife of the most noble and honoured man in Ujjayinī.

Vasantasenā possesses all the qualities that go to make an ideal lady, viz, nobility of heart, sincerity, constancy, kindness, love for children, and a high sense of dignity. She is described, in the prologue itself, as a courtesan who loves virtues,¹ which sounds paradoxical. It seems to be as non-existent as the flower in the sky. She who is rolling in wealth and is wooed by the brother-in-law of the king himself, with presents worth ten thousand gold coins, is on her part madly in love with a poor Brāhmaṇa merchant, who cannot even make both ends meet. Her answer to her mother, who asks her to go to Saṁsthānaka, shows her mentality clearly. She tells the servant-girl, who brought the message from the old woman, "If mother wants me to remain alive, she should not send me such orders; go and tell her this."² By this answer, she is not only showing her repulsion to the brother-in-law of the king, but she is actually refusing to continue in the profession.

She worships Cārudatta as a god, though she would have nothing to do with kings, ministers, or rich people. For, her idea is not to serve but to enjoy.³ Neither does she de-

1. "....गुणानुरक्ता गणिका....।"

Mrcch. Act I. 6

2. वसन्तसेना—यदि मां जीवन्तीमिच्छसि तदेवं न पुनरहं मात्राज्ञापयितव्या ।

Mrcch. Act IV. P. 107

3. वसन्तसेना—रन्तुमिच्छामि । न सेवितुं ।

Mrcch. Act II. P. 50

sire the company of Brāhmaṇa scholars, because they are only worthy of worship as far as she is concerned.¹ Nor are rich traders able to satisfy her, as they always want to leave their beloveds and go in pursuit of more and more riches and thus give more sorrow than happiness.² And she professes that, as far as she is concerned, virtues are instrumental to the feeling of love not force.³ Not only this, she is also aware that a courtesan who loves a poor man will be beyond disparagement in this world.⁴ The intensity of her love and admiration for Cārudatta is such that any object associated with Cārudatta is sacred and holy to her. Samvāhaka receives a right royal welcome in her house, because he had the privilege to serve the noble Brāhmaṇa for some time in the past. When Śakara insultingly calls him 'daridra Cārudatta' she is almost mad with rage and kicks the former, thus actually inviting death. With her unassuming and frank nature, she secures a place for herself in the hearts of every one in the household of Cārudatta, including Dhūtā, the wedded wife of her lover. In all humility she sends back the diamond-necklace presented to her by Cārudatta in place of the stolen ornaments with a suitable message to the noble Dhūtā.⁵ She could not bear to see little Rohasena weeping for a shining toycart. Hence she gives away all her golden ornaments to get a golden toycart made for him. Here it is more her motherly love for Rohasena that is re-

1. वसन्तसेना—पूजनीयो मे ब्राह्मणजनः । Mṛcch. Act. II. P. 50

2. वसन्तसेना—उपाख्यस्नेहमपि प्रणयिजनं परित्यज्य देशान्तरगमनेन वाणिज-
जनो महद्वियोगं दुःखमुत्पादयति । Mṛcch. Act II. P. 50

3. वसन्तसेना—गुणः खलु अनुरागस्य कारणं, न पुनर्बलात्कारः ।

Mṛcch. Act I. P. 23

4. वसन्तसेना—दरिद्रपुरुषसंक्रान्तमनाः खलु गणिका लोकेऽवचनीया भवति ।

Mṛcch. Act II. P. 51

5. वसन्तसेना—अहं श्रीचारुदत्तस्य गुणनिर्जिता दासी तदा युष्माकमपि ।

तदेषा तत्रैव कण्ठाभरणं भवतु रत्नावली । Mṛcch. Act VI. P. 176

vealed than the admiration and love she bears for his father.

Her sense of humour and jolly temper is seen in the very dramatic situation that she creates in giving Madanikā to Śarvilaka, when he brings the stolen ornaments according to advice given to him by Madanikā, her equally clever and resourceful maid-in-company. The whole scene reveals the nobility of Vasantasenā's heart. When, in the end, Śarvilaka enters the scene as the representative of the new king and bestows the status of a *kulavadhū* on her, one cannot help feeling that this was the most proper thing the king has done.

Dhūtā, the wife of the hero, is seen only once or twice on the scene. She is the ideal Hindu wife as described in the Epics and Manusmṛiti. Her sole purpose in life is to safeguard the happiness, good name and welfare of her husband. Her ideals are the same as those of her husband and it is clearly shown that she is the real *sahadharmacārīṇī*. Character is the only thing that counts with her also. She prefers bodily wounds to the wounds on the character.¹ The way in which she offers the priceless necklace to save her husband's name, though she knew very well that it would go to her rival, and a courtesan for that matter, is simply admirable. It seems to represent a time when women had the sense of honour and dignity even as men themselves, if not more. Rightly does Maitreya remark, "Friend! accept this, the result of marrying a wife suitable to you in every way."² Dhūtā's answer to Vasantansenā while returning the necklace is quite befitting her position as the better-half of the noble Cārudatta, and also her own noble nature. She sends word, "My lord has given it as a present to you. It is not

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1. वधूः—वेदि ! किं भणसि—'अपरिक्षतशरीर आर्यपुत्रः' इति । वरमिदानीं
स शरीरेण परिक्षतः न पुनश्चारिष्येण । Mrcch. Act III. P. 100
2. विदूषकः—भोः! यत्ते सदृशदारसंग्रहस्य फलम् । Mrcch. Act III. P. 102

proper that I should take it back. Further, you must know that my husband is my greatest ornament"¹. Maitreya obeys her commands without a question, which shows the high regard he had for his friend's wife. Her love for her husband is such that she cannot brook to the idea of hearing evil news about him. She prefers committing the sin of suicide, and prepares to enter the fire before the news could reach her.² When every thing ends well and all come home, including Vasantasenā as the wedded wife of her husband, none is more happy than Dhūtā, who welcomes the latter as her own sister.

Madanikā and Radanikā are the two maidservants of Vasantasenā and Chārudatta respectively. Both befit the situations they hold in the respective households and suit very well their respective master and mistress. Madanikā is a sprightly young lady, very clever and intelligent, as is proved on more than one occasion. Her advice to Śarvilaka how to manage the situation, made difficult by his stealing the ornament from Cārudatta's house, is indeed very admirable. Her conversations with her mistress on various occasions show her as a practical woman with a sense of humour and quick repartee. She is loyal to her mistress and has a high regard for her. She is very sad to part with her. Her love for Śarvilaka also is very deep and sincere. At the same time, she, as a true wife, would not have him shirk his duty. She sends him to rescue his friend; who is in danger, immediately after they are united.

Radanikā is the right kind that suits a house like that of Cārudatta. She is also a loyal and sincere servant who respects character in preference to wealth. She has her own

1. चेटो—आर्ये ! भणत्यार्या धूता—आर्यपुत्रेण गुष्माकं प्रसादीकृता । न युक्तं ममेतां ग्रहीतुम् । आर्यपुत्र एव ममाभरणविशेष इति जानातु भवती ।

Mrcch. Act VI. P. 176

2. धूता—विभेम्यार्यपुत्रस्यामङ्गलाकर्णनात् ।....वरं पापाचरणम् । न पुनरायं-पुत्रस्यामङ्गलाकर्णनम् ।

Mrcch. Act X. P. 333

simple and comely individuality that distinguishes her even as a maid in the house. The scenes with the Śākara and also with Vasantasenā are examples to the point.

Vasantasenā's mother, the old courtesan, appears on the scene only once, while she is called to the court to give evidence against Cārudatta. Of course, once before, she had sent a message to her daughter asking her to accept the advances of Saṁsthānaka and was refused obedience. That comes to us only as a hearsay. The little seen of her on the scene is enough to convince us that, though an old courtesan, well advanced in her profession, she was not devoid of the qualities that go to make a good woman. Her futile attempts to save Cārudatta, in spite of the fact that he was denounced for the murder of her own daughter, is indeed very pathetic. Her whole behaviour in court, as depicted by the poet, makes one forget everything about her being a despicable bazar woman. We begin to question ourselves, 'if left alone, would she also have not developed into a good and chaste woman?' Our hearts go out in sympathy to her in her bereavement.

We have already noticed the general condition of society as found in this play. We have enough material to gather that women were neither as free as they were in the Vedic period, nor were they confined within the four walls of the harem. This play also seems to represent a society in which women were struggling hard to keep their deteriorating position with the help of people like the author himself and the law-givers like Varāhamihira. Polygamy had not come into vogue as a common custom. But, even people like Cārudatta took more than one wife with the excuse that "there it is the youth that is to be blamed, and not character."¹ Some scholars point out on the basis of Dhūtā attempt-

1. चारुदत्तः—भो अधिकृताः मया कथमीदृशं वक्तव्यम् यथा गणिका मम मित्रमिति । अथवा यौवनमत्रापराध्यति न चारित्र्यम् ।

ting to enter the pyre, that the custom of Satī was prevalent in the time of Mṛcchakatika. But, the words of the lady herself disprove this conclusion. She is aware that it is a sin to commit suicide, but she would prefer to sin than hear any thing bad about her husband. This is clearly meant by the author to show the intense love the lady had for her husband, and nothing else. In this connection, it will be well to remember that not only Dhūtā, but Maitreya, and even Radanikā were going to follow suit. If we accept that Dhūtā's entering the fire was a proof of Satī, then we will also have to accept that friends and servants too entered the funeral pyre with their friends and masters in turn. The veil is presented to Vasantasenā as a mark of honour by the king through Śarvilaka, while she was raised to the position of a woman of noble birth. This perhaps goes to support our conclusion that by this period people of royal and aristocratic families had begun to use the veil as a mark of dignity. We have had examples of similar instances in some of the plays ascribed to Bhāsa also.

In general the impression one gets, after reading through these plays, is that women were still holding out, though slowly the sands were slipping away from under their feet.

Let us now examine what the greatest of Indian poets has seen and recorded for posterity.

CHAPTER III

THE PLAYS OF KALIDASA

After a study of the three plays of Kālidāsa one of the ideas that insistantly occurs to the mind is the attitude of the poet towards women. *Woman* seems to be a sacred name to him. He looks up to her with worshipful eyes. In all his works he depicts the world in its true colours. He had a vast treasure of knowledge. He seems to have travelled all over India and to have acquired a detailed and close knowledge of places and people, their manners and customs. He saw the society in its various phases. And he portrayed all that he saw. He has depicted all kinds of people, and also every possible type of relationship : the king and his subjects, the parents and children, the husband and wife, the master and servant, the ascetic and soldier. He has painted before us children, youths, old people, the sensuous, the spiritualists and the materialists. But it is to the woman that we are made to pay homage by him.

He seems to approach her with a mingled feeling of respect, love, reverence and wonder. In his works we find all types and kinds of women. Women in all stages and conditions are depicted there : love-lorn woman, the happy wife, and the discontented beloved, the daughter, wife and mother, the widow, the deserted woman, and she who has renounced the world. But nowhere is the picture of woman half-painted; for, he depicts the other half in the man of suitable relation to complete the picture. Where there is the daughter there is the father also; if it is the wife, then

the husband, if the mother, then the son. Kālidāsa believes and convinces his audience that man and woman are never complete without each other. It is this idea that he has propagated in all his works. *Satyam, Śivam Sundaram* is the aim of the whole universe, or the ultimate goal of every human being. To achieve this, a pure and sacred approach to life is needed; and for this, both men and women are equally responsible. Both have their respective duties to perform in supplementing and complementing each other. When this requirement is fulfilled, the result cannot but be *śreya*, the highest good for everyone concerned. When it is not, the only result is deterioration and destruction. This is the idea he propagated. He considers woman as the power incarnate of man; the strength, that makes man act in the right way.¹ Hence women are considered by him as the pillars of society; and also that, there can be no safety for anyone or anything, if they are ill-treated or neglected by men. This firm belief of his, he propagated in all his works—dramas as well as poems.

Of the three plays of Kālidāsa, the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* is undoubtedly the master-piece of the master-poet. As to the other two, scholars are of opinion that the *Mālavikāgnimitra* preceded the *Vikramorvaśīya*. But the internal evidences found in these plays seem to point out just the opposite way. It will not be out of place here, to examine the different points and see how far we can go in deciding the relative chronology of these three plays. This will help to guide us in following the working of the poet's mind in the development and depiction of the various female characters.

In the *Vikramorvaśīya*, Kālidāsa seems to be feeling the pulse of his audience. He takes a legend from the Vedas which had also caught the epic fancy. His heroine is a hea-

1. त्वामामनन्ति प्रकृतिं पुरुषार्थप्रवर्तिनीम् ।

तद्दिशि नमुदासीनं त्वामेव पुरुषं विदुः ॥ K. S. II. 13

venly nymph, who is loved by a mighty king equally well-known in the celestial and the terrestrial worlds. For all appearances, Kālidāsa is only trying to give pleasure to his audience by portraying before them a very enjoyable aspect of life, mingling heaven and earth, filling their minds with wonder and joy. But, in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, the theme chosen is more human, and more true to life. Queen Dhārīṇī, Mālavikā, Bakulāvalikā and Nipuṇikā are more familiar to the people who visualise them. Moreover, these characters seem to have greater purposes to fulfil than those who are shown in the first mentioned play. There, the poet seems to be a bit nervous as to the welcome his work may meet with. In his introduction to the *Vikramorvaśīya* the words of the *Sūtradhāra* are remarkable in this context. "Oh ! learned ones ! please listen to this work of Kālidāsa attentively, either as a token of your kindness and courtesy to those who love you, or of the respect due to a good theme or hero."¹ On the other hand, in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, the poet seems to be on surer grounds. There, the *Sūtradhāra* is allowed to indulge in a conversation with his colleague as to the propriety of staging the work of a new poet, leaving out those of the famous poets of the day². The statement of the *Sūtradhāra* that the audience wishes to see the new play written by Kālidāsa along with the assertion that, "all things are not good just because they are old; nor are others bad, because they are new. Wise men accept everything after putting them to test, while the fools follow the deci-

1. प्रणयिषु वा दाक्षिण्यादथवा सद्बस्तुपुरुषबहुमानात् ।

शृणुत जना अवधानात्क्रियामिमां कालिदासस्य ॥ V. U. Act I. 1

2. सूत्रधारः—अभिहितोऽस्मि विद्वत्परिषदा कालिदासप्रथितवस्तु मालविकाग्निमित्रं नाम नाटकं अस्मिन् वसन्तोत्सवे प्रयोक्तव्यमिति ।

पारिपाश्विक—मा तावत् । प्रथितयशसां भासकविपुत्रसौमिल्लकादीनां प्रबन्धानतिक्रम्य वर्तमानकवेः कालिदासस्य क्रियायां कथं परिषदो बहुमानः

M. A. I. P. 184

sion taken by others,"¹ points out clearly towards the position Kālidāsa had come to possess at the time when his play was being staged. Obviously he was prepared to put his work to test by that time.

In the choice of the theme and the development of the plot also, the *Mālavikāgnimitra* compares favourably with the *Vikramorvaṣīya*. In the latter play, he chose a theme from the ancient legends, and attempted to give a feeling of joy and wonder to his audience, only hinting at what he actually wanted to tell them. But, in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, it seems that he had pleased the people. They have appreciated his method. Now he is prepared to try his technique of remedying the evil prevalent in society. For this purpose, he came down to the human world this time. He chose Agnimitra, the king of Vidiśā, as his hero, and depicted the court intrigues, as he saw them. According to Vincent Smith the Śunga dynasty was founded by Puṣyamitra in 183 B. C. Agnimitra, Puṣyamitra and Vasumitra are historical personages; while the ministers Vāṭṭaka, Mādhavasena and Yajñasena also might have been known persons.

The love-story of *Mālavikā*, and a few of the characters might have been the invention of the poet who perhaps was following the footsteps of his much adored predecessor Bhāsa.

In the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, the development of the plot and the character delineation present a more mature hand. Queen Dhārīnī is a definite improvement on the Queen Auśīnarī. Gautama undoubtedly shows an individuality of his own, and compares favourably with Mānavaka, the friend

1. सूत्रधारः—अयि विवेकविश्रान्तमभिहितम् । पश्य—

पुराणमित्येव न साधु सर्वं न चापि काव्यं नवमित्यवद्यम् ।

सन्तः परिक्ष्यान्यतरद्भजन्ते मूढः परप्रत्ययनेयबुद्धिः ॥

of Purūraṇas, in fact, with any other Viḍuṣaka in the whole arena of Sanskrit dramatic literature. Following up this method of comparison there is enough evidence to prove that Vikramorvaṣīya was the first play of the poet, while the Mālavikāgnimitra came next.

In the Abhijñānaśākuntala, he seems to have got over much of his hesitation. Here, he seems to be quite sure of his grounds, sure as to what he wanted to say and also about the methods he had to use. Though the theme is still a love-story, and the poet also is the same, the finished product before us is very different from anything that any body had hitherto seen. Of course, the poet does not leave his natural humility even here, as is clear from the introduction he makes through the Sūtradhāra. He says, "as long as the wise and learned people are not pleased, I do not take my knowledge and practice to be good and laudable. For, even after receiving the best of education the mind is not sure of one's own efficiency."¹ Accepting this relative chronology of these plays, we pass on to the detailed study of each with special reference to the female characters depicted therein.

The central theme of all the three plays of Kālidāsa is the same. The scenes represented by him are palaces, royal gardens, forests and penance groves. But each of these plays has a typical atmosphere of its own, depending upon the leading female character.

The story centering round Urvaṣī, the heavenly nymph, begins and ends as just a love-story, with sprinklings of refreshing ideals natural to the works of Kālidāsa. In this play, only the conjugal relationship of man and woman is emphasized. Urvaṣī, the heavenly nymph, is the heroine. She

1. आपरितोषाद्विदुषां न साधु मन्ये प्रयोगविज्ञानम् ।

बलवदपि शिक्षितानाम् आत्मन्यप्रत्ययं चेतः ॥

Ab. Ś. I. 2

is a good actress who is admired and honoured in heaven for her beauty and accomplishment. According to the traditions a courtesan should be well-educated, cultured and refined. Urvaśī fulfils all these requirements. She belongs to the *pragalbhā* type of heroines. She, being a celestial personage, is much above the terrestrial women. By nature and temperament she is different from all other women in the Sanskrit dramatic literature. She has powers which others do not possess. The very nature of the heroine and the mode of the beginning of the play show that Kālidāsa was trying to create an interest in the heart of his audience, and that he was bent upon forcing them to listen to what he had to say. So, very deliberately, he was offering them strange and wonderful spectacles on quite a familiar theme bedecked in very beautiful language. The story of Urvaśī had a long tradition behind it. The Ṛgveda, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the Bṛhaddevatā, and the Vedārtha Dīpikā give the story in one connection or other. In the Matsyapurāṇa, the Bhāgavata, and the Kathāsaritsāgara too we hear of the love of Purūravas for Urvaśī, the jewel of Indra's court. But in all those versions of the story the love is all one-sided, Urvaśī having no feelings whatever for her lover. She seems to be crude and brutal in her refusal to stay with the king after she had enjoyed his company for some time. The conditions she enjoins to ensure her company to Purūravas appear to be rather a foreconsidered excuse to leave the king at her will. But the Urvaśī, presented by Kālidāsa, is a new character altogether. She is a combination of the celestial powers with the most human and womanly qualities. She is a dignified woman with her flaws as well as good qualities, a woman to be loved and respected by all.

As has already been stated, Urvaśī is a heroine belonging to the *pragalbhā* type, and so is capable of finding ways and means to achieve her desire herself. She, with the help of her friend Chitrālekṣhā and her own superhuman powers,

makes bold advances to the king. She is so love-stricken that she cannot bear even a moment's separation from her lover. In the first act itself, Chitralekhā is heard to be chiding her for her impatience.¹

The character of Urvaśī seems to be rather inconsistent throughout. At times she is only an ordinary love-sick woman. She loses herself in her dreams so much that, in acting the part of Lakṣmī in the drama Lakṣmīswayaṁvara, she blurts out 'Purūrvasi' instead of 'Puruṣottamē.'² At another time, she is ready to approach the king as an *abhisārikā*. She being a divine being, the king is unable to do anything except wait and pine away for her.

In the Vikramorvaśīya, we hear much praise about the courage, strength, dutifulness and other fine qualities of king Purūravas. But what we actually see does not bear out all that we are told. His duties as the king or other ties do not seem to count much with him. Nor does he seem to have much respect or real consideration for his chief queen. As we have already noticed, Kālidāsa is a believer in the supplementing and complementing nature of man and woman to each other. Accordingly, only a self-confident, courageous and dignified heroine could supplement such a hero. The queen Auśīnarī did not have the strength of love and dignity that could command the love and respect of her lord and master. The 'should be *śakti*' of Purūravas was only a weak and ordinary woman, who was struggling in the cobweb of her own jealousy and consequent suffering. It was Urvaśī, who came on the scene to show what a real woman could do.

1. हला उर्वशि ! पर्यवस्थापय आत्मानम् । अनप्सरेव मे प्रतिभासि ।

V. U. Act I. P. 109

2. ततस्तया पुरुषोत्तमे इति भणितव्ये पुरुरवसीति निर्गता वाणी ।

V. U. Act III. P. 135

Urvaśī is an unseen witness to the scene between the king and the queen and says, "the king does love his wife."¹ But she is not very much bothered about this, either because she is quite confident about her own powers, or because she has a keen insight into the nature of her lover and also of the situation. The moment the king is released by the queen to have his own way, he hurries to enjoy his good fortune without the least thought as to what would happen to her after his departure; which fact perhaps justifies the above conclusion. But when he loses Urvaśī in the forest, his attitude is very different. His one desire is to find her back. He wanders about frantically, as an *unmatta*, searching for his beloved. It is Urvaśī who reminds him of his duties² after she comes back to life by the touch of the *sangamanīya ratna*. If not for her insistence, the king might not have even remembered that he was a ruler and so must look after his subjects. Again, when he knows about the existence of his son, he is very happy; but the moment he hears that, as a consequence, Urvaśī will have to leave him, neither the son nor the kingdom can hold him back. He decides to retire to the forest, and stops only when he is sure of the eternal company of Urvaśī through the kind intervention of Indra. Thus we see that it is she who always comes up as the redeeming power to keep up the dignity of the hero.

There is one strange incident that sounds a jarring note in the sweet melody of the character of this heavenly nymph. Ayus, their firstborn son, was immediately removed to a hermitage and hidden there. Urvaśī is a constant witness to the agony of the king due to his having no

1. उर्वशी—हला प्रियकलत्रो राजर्षिः । न पुनर्हृदयं निवर्तयितुं शक्नोमि ।

V. U. III. P. 135

2. उर्वशी—महान् खलु कालस्तव प्रतिष्ठानान्निर्गतस्य । असूयन्ति महान् प्रकृतयः । तदेहि । निवर्तविहे ।

V. U. IV. P. 167

issues. Yet she keeps quiet till it becomes impossible to hide the fact any further. She seems to be justified in her action, as we notice the reaction of the king to the whole situation. But, still, the whole episode appears to be a bit unnatural and selfish. Desire seems to predominate the love of both the king as well as Urvaśī. The poet is famous; the treatment and development of characters are excellent; and the happy conclusion is reached, but when everything is said and done, we feel not fully satisfied; there seems to be something strange in the atmosphere. It is the heroine, who is a celestial courtesan brought to the nether world. Her environments and language are not quite intelligible to the ordinary man. Many things are natural and simple to her, which are not so to the ordinary human beings. The poet himself feels this and, in more than one places, hurries to remind¹ us of the fact that she is a super-human individual, and so one should not try to apply the same standards as those of the human-beings to her.

Queen Auśīnarī is brought on the stage, perhaps to show the real position of women in the contemporary society. She is a good woman in the general sense of the word. She loves her husband, and is prepared to go to any extent in order to please him. She is cultured and refined as the average women belonging to royal families. We have an example of her scrupulous nature in the episode of the love-letter of Urvaśī flying into her presence. She does not want to read it herself till she is sure about the origin of the letter. But, at the same time, she does not hesitate to encourage her maid-in-waiting to read and find the contents of the letter.

Matsyapurāṇa and the other sources of this play do not mention any other wife of Purūravas. It is Kālidāsa

1. ओ ! मा भवान् सर्वं मानुषीधर्मं दिव्यासु संभावयतु । प्रभावनिगूढानि तासां चरितानि । V. U. Act V. p. 146

who introduces the chief queen Auśinari as a rival to Urvaśī, and perhaps he had a special purpose in doing so. Kālidāsa holds that the *Puruṣa* can do nothing without his *Śakti*. He intends to prove this by the plight of Purūravas. Though a very strong and powerful monarch, great enough to help even the king of gods, he cuts a sad figure due to his love for the celestial nymph and his disregard for his own lawfully wedded queen. The queen, who ought to have been his better half, is really no better than him, and so is incapable of getting him out of the plight. She is very jealous by nature, and behaves like any other ordinary woman. As soon as she knows that the heart of Purūravas has gone astray, she goes out of her way to find out the cause. Once she realises that she has lost her supremacy over his heart, she indulges in the most bitter taunts.¹ Though a princess by birth and a queen by marriage, she does not seem to be able to hold her position, or command respect from any one around her. The Vidūṣaka dares to ask her on her face, "is the king so dear to you?"² At the same time within himself he feels rather amused at the so-called generosity of the queen.³ When she leaves the presence of Purūravas he plainly tells the king, what he thinks about it.⁴

In her presence, her status and position is respected by people around her, but she is not capable of commanding the spontaneous affection and respect of others. With all her good qualities, she is still a woman of an ordinary type.

1. नास्ति खलु भवतोऽपराधः । अहमेवान्नापराद्धा या प्रतिकूलदर्शना भूत्वा प्र-
तस्ते तिष्ठामि । V. U. II. p. 132
2. भवति ! किं तादृशस्ते प्रियस्तत्र भवान् ? V. U. III. p. 144
3. भिन्नहस्ते मत्स्ये पलायिते निर्विण्णो धीवरो भणति—गच्छ ! धर्मो मे
भविष्यतीति । V. U. III. p. 144
4. असाध्य इति वदन्नेनानुर इव स्वैरं मुक्तो भवांस्तत्र भवत्या ।

Her soliloquy¹ and her later behaviour are quite typical. The king's formal attempts to please her prove to be of no avail, and she leaves in anger. Purūravas is only happy at the turn of events. It is the queen herself who is sad and repentant. Her power over the king is very limited, and so she has to be patient if she has to keep her position. Thus she has to accept the inevitable, and does it through the *priyānuprasādana vrata*, wherein she takes the vow of treating her rival also as a friend.² Neither the king nor the queen seems to have a high ideal as far as the family life or individual duties are concerned. This attitude towards life has brought Purūravas to the lower plane. But his sincere love for Urvaśī seems to save the situation. For, it is she who, after purifying herself by long penance in the Kumāravana and also after becoming the mother of a son, was able to raise him back to his lost glory.

The condition of society portrayed in this play seems to be not very much different from what we see in the present day. Polygamy was the order of the day, and the position of women not very commendable. Kālidāsa does not feel satisfied with the existing state of affairs. At the same time, he has to be very careful as to what he says. Though he has much to say, he cannot say anything before preparing the ground for it. Hence, in this first play, he only draws pictures of the existing conditions without much comment. In *Auśīnari* he portrays the average woman, while through the celestial heroine he gives a glimpse of what a woman can possibly do if she wishes to. The realistic portrayals of society, as it were, are found in this play.

1. मा खलु लघुहृदयाहमनुनयं बहु मन्ये । किं त्वदाक्षिण्यकृतात्पश्चात्तापा-
द्विभेमि । V. U. II. p. 132
2. एषाहं देवतामिथुनं रोहिणीमृगलाञ्छनं साक्षीकृत्यार्यपुत्रमनुप्रसादयामि ।
अद्यप्रभृति यां स्त्रियमार्यपुत्रः प्रार्थयते या चार्यपुत्रस्य समागमप्रणयिनी तयां
सह मया प्रीतिवन्धेन वतितव्यम् इति । V. U. III. p. 144

They are the same ideas and ideals that are held up in the second play, *Mālavikāgnimitra*. This play, though naming *Mālavikā* as the heroine, is really led by queen *Dhāriṇī*. It shows an atmosphere of happy and prosperous home-life. In spite of the fickle and amorous nature of the hero, *Agnimitra*, the dignity of the court and the nobility of the harem are kept up. We do not have to search or to know the reason. Queen *Dhāriṇī*, the loving and noble wife, is here as the saviour.

The heroine of the play is *Mālavikā*, in so far as her union with the hero is the final aim of the play. In fact, she leads the play without any effort on her part. In contrast to *Urvaśī*, who belongs to the *pragalbhā* type of heroines, *Mālavikā* is the *mugdha*, described by the dramaturgists as young, timid, and soft even in anger. She is the model of a girl of noble birth—a *kulkanyakā*. She is innocent, humble and submissive. Her love is pure and trusting. She just moves about, as though led by some unseen hand of fate, suffers every thing silently, and accepts the happiness when it comes to her with equal submissiveness and humility. Very often one begins to wonder whether anything would have happened if *Bakulāvalikā*, *Parivrājikā*, and *Gautama* did not intervene. The poet seems to present before us the ideal of a daughter, a girl of noble birth, in *Mālavikā*, who in course of time can bloom into the guardian-angel of the hearth and home; the bud which, when it blossoms forth, would fill the whole world with the sweet fragrance of innocence, nobleness and purity.

As has already been stated, though the love-story centres round *Mālavikā*, the real leader of the story is *Dhāriṇī*, the chief queen of *Agnimitra*. The king has already seen *Mālavikā*'s beauty in the picture. He is anxious to meet her personally. But his love is not so intoxicating as to make him forget everything else, like king *Purūravas*. He would like to get *Mālavikā* for himself. And he asks his trusted friend, the clever *Gautama*, to do the

needful. And then, he is seen attending to his royal duties. He hears the cases brought to him by the ministers and gives them definite orders as to what should be done and what should not be. The ministers, officers, and the army seem to be quite under his control. He is indeed a voluptuous king, but his court does not show any loss of dignity. His amours are limited within the four walls of the harem and are, extraordinarily enough, as allowed or disallowed by his noble queen, Dhārinī.

According to the story, where the theme is more or less the same as in the first play, Dhārinī's place is similar to Auśinārī's. But actually she strikes a different note in our hearts. The poet himself seems to be standing with folded hands before her who is love and kindness incarnate. She is the real *mahadevī*, the ideal *gr̥hīnī*, as Kālidāsa would have her. From the very beginning, we feel the guarding and protecting love and grace of the queen, even when she is nowhere to be seen. The conversation between Bakulāvalikā and Kaumudikā¹ is a key to the whole situation. Immediately, the presence of a guardian-angle is felt, who is ever alert to correct, to love, to chastize and to bless everyone in the arena. Once again Kālidāsa proves here that woman is the power that lends light and life to man. As long as Dhārinī is there, Agnimitra cannot fall below his status. She supplements and complements him everywhere. It is impossible to imagine either Agnimitra or Dhārinī without each other, even though we may forget Irāvati, and even Mālavikā for that matter. Herein lies the difference between the two queens. By the very first introduction², the poet draws our attention to her special qualities in his typically suggestive way. Of course,

1. Mā. Ag. I, Miśraviṣkambhaka. pp. 185-188

2. राजा—मंगलालंकृता भाति कौशिक्या यातिवेषया ।

त्रयी विग्रहवत्येव सममध्यात्मविद्यया ॥ Mā. Ag. I. 14

there is a similar description of Auśīnarī¹ in the Vikramorvaśīya also, but the difference is too obvious to be lost sight of. While the appearance of the former as the Veda personified—*vigrahavatī trayī*—was natural and constant, the pacific appearance of Auśīnarī was only temporary as indicated by the words, *vratāpadeśojhita garvavṛttinā*. Her real nature is characterized by pride and prejudice. Dhāriṇī is not a person who can be ignored at any time by anybody, the king, the Vidūṣaka Gautamā, the Parivrājikā, Mālavikā, the maid-servants and even Irāvati seem to be tied up to her by a soft but strong chord of love and reverence. None of them could be what they were, if not for her, whose moral support and loving care are extended even to the most insignificant of her dependents. She rules with love and justice.

The episode of the dance performance of Mālavikā, with the preceding and following incidents, was a terrible test to the queen's patience. Still she carried herself with full dignity and wisdom. Though her attempts to save the girl from the eyes of the king did not succeed, everybody, even the servants, knew that Agnimitra would not do anything to hurt the queen.² She was wise enough to realize that the inevitable had happened. She knew her husband well enough and when she had to yield, she did that gracefully, thus compelling others to yield themselves to her in turn.

While the Parivrājikā, with faked innocence, states that the test of dance is in performance and so debates would not make anyone any wiser, and then enquires about

1. राजा—सितांशुका मंगलमात्रभूषणा पवित्रदूर्वाकुरलाञ्छितालका ।

व्रतापदेशोज्झितगर्ववृत्तिना मयि प्रसन्ना वपुषैव लक्ष्यते ॥

V. U. III. 12

2. समाहितिका—बाढं किल तस्यां साभिलाषो भर्ता किन्तु केवलं देव्या धारिण्याश्रितं रक्षन्नात्मनः प्रभुत्वं न दर्शयति । Mā. Ag. III. p. 206

the opinion of the queen,¹ the answer the latter gives is very significant.² She makes it quite plain that she is not blind to the reality. Her own statement to the king is a proof of this point.³ Any other individual in her position would have put a stop to all that nonsense, using her own authority; but Dhārinī would not do it in that way. She rises to the occasion and wishes to manage in such a way that everything may end well for everybody concerned. As the queen and presiding deity of the harem, her responsibility was manifold. She had to keep up her own dignity, the dignity of the king and also that of the royal harem. She would not and could not allow her husband to become an object of laughter for any one. At the same time, she would not have him run away with the idea that he had walked a step over her. Though she had all respect for her husband, when she found that the pranks of Gautama were crossing the limits, she calmly told Gaṇadāsa, "your disciple has finished her performance,"⁴ indicating thereby that he should take away Mālavikā, thus ending all that foolishness which was quite below the dignity of the king.

In connection with the *aśokadohada* episode, some critics are of opinion that Dhārinī is also a jealous wife. They say, "her jealousy towards Irāvati is manifest by her action of appointing Mālavikā to fulfill the *dohada*, while she could have easily deputed the former for the job." This conclusion has hardly any truth in it. *Aśokadohada* has to be fulfilled by beautiful women of noble

1. देव ! प्रयोगप्रधानं हि नाट्यशास्त्रम् । किमत्र वाग्व्यवहारेण ? कथं वा देवी मन्यते ? Mā. Ag. I. p. 193.

2. यदि मां पृच्छसि तदैतयोर्विवाद एव न मे रोचते । Mā. Ag. I. p. 193

3. यदि राज्यकार्येष्वीदृशुपायनिपुणतार्यपुत्रस्य ततः शोभनं भवेत् ।

Mā. Ag. I. p. 196

4. आर्यं गणदास ! ननु दक्षितोपदेशा ते शिष्या । Mā. Ag. II. p. 202

birth¹. Irāvati, though beautiful, is not of noble lineage, as indicated by many statements in the text itself similar to that of Gautama in one place.² The order to fulfill *dohada* seems more to be a test of Mālavikā's birth, as could be deduced from the conditions attached to it and the reward promised. If the Aśoka tree blossomed within five nights, Mālavikā was to have her desire fulfilled.³ That the intention of the queen was not unknown to Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā is proved by the latter's statement to console her friend.⁴ Before finally giving her consent to the union of Mālavikā with her husband, the queen wishes to prove that the girl deserves the honour. In fact, the episode goes to prove not the jealousy, but the goodwill and discretion of the

1. Kālidāsa refers to the *aśokadohada* in the Meghadūta, the Raghuvamśa, the Kumārasambhava and the Mālavikāgnimitra :

पादाघातादशोकं विकसति वकुलं योषितामास्यमद्यैः—इति कविसमय
प्रसिद्धिः । Meghadoot : Edited by Shri Bidhubhushana
Goswami, 1905, p. 180

एकः सख्यास्तव सह मया वामपादाभिलाषी

काङ्क्षत्यन्यो वदनमदिरां दोहदच्छन्ननाज्याः । Uttarameghaḥ. 18

कुसुमं कृतदोहदस्त्वया यदशोकोऽयमुदीरयिष्यति । R. V. VIII. 62

असूत सद्यः कुसुमान्यशोकः स्कन्धात् प्रभृत्येव सपल्लवानि ।

पादेन नापेक्षत सुन्दरीणां सम्पर्कमाशिञ्जितनूपुरेण ॥ K. S. III. 26

राजाः—नवकिसलयरागेणाग्रपादेन

बाला,

स्फुरितनखरुचा द्वौ हन्तुमर्हत्यनेन,

अकुसुमितमशोकं दोहदापेक्षया वा,

प्रणमितशिरसं वा कान्तमार्द्रापराधम् ॥ Mā. Ag. III. 12

2. विदूषकः—समापत्तिदृष्टेन देव्याः परिजनेन संकथापि यदि अपराधः स्थाप्यते अत्र त्वमेव प्रमाणम् ॥ Mā. Ag. III, p. 221

3. मालविका—यद्यसौ पञ्चरात्राम्यन्तरे कुसुमं दर्शयति, ततोऽहमभिलाष-
पूरयितुकं प्रसादं दापयिष्यामीति । Mā. Ag. III p. 209

4. वकुलावलिका—आश्वसितु सखी । सत्यप्रतिज्ञा देवी । Mā. Ag. IV. p. 239

queen. Her treatment of Irāvati, throughout the play, gives evidence of the consideration the queen had for her. The imprisonment of Mālavikā by her at the instigation of Irāvati is another point towards the true character of Dhārinī. She is always anxious to do the right thing and keep the discipline of the harem. At the same time she is careful not to hurt the feelings of any one who is under her protection. Her rule is not authorised by fear but by love. She is not a jealous wife but an indulgent mother, so to say. She is the real *sahadarmachārīni* and the true well-wisher of the king. When the king says in the end—"Oh Queen ! may you be always pleased with me; that is the only thing I desire,"¹ we feel like joining hands with him. When such a woman is happy nothing bad or inauspicious can happen to any one who is in any way connected with her. Dhārinī stands high above all with her peaceful and loving character, herself doing the right thing always, wishing happiness for all, patient and forgiving, a combination of the divine love and patience mingled with all the sweet human trends of character; thus personifying the highest ideal of Indian womanhood. It is the power of Dhārinī that gives Agnimitra his dignity; it is her prayers and blessings that make her son Vasumitra victorious everywhere. She is the real protector of the hearth and home, as visualised by the sages and described by Manu.²

Queen Dhārinī, the maiden Mālavikā, and the *rājāvallabhā* Irāvati are three important women-characters that attract our attention in this play of Kālidāsa. Each is a type by herself. In Mālavikā we have a noble daughter, who is the future hope of a happy house-holder. In Dhārinī

1. राजा—त्वं मे प्रसादसुमुखी भव देवि नित्य

मेतावदेव हृदये प्रतिपालनीयम् । Mā. Ag. V. 20

2. प्रजनार्थं महाभागाः पूजार्हा गृहदीप्तयः ।

स्त्रियः श्रियश्च गेहेषु न विशेषोऽस्ति कश्चन ॥ Manu. IX. 26

we have a guardian-angel of the home that she rules over. But both these are the flowers of Indian womanhood in their respective arenas as visualised by the poet. The reality is represented to us in the person of Irāvati, the mistress of the king Agnimitra. Queen Auśinari and Irāvati are very similar to each other in character and nature. The difference noticeable between the two is more due to their respective positions in the harem than inherent. Their prying nature, their jealous reactions at meeting their rivals, and their unwilling and ungracious acceptance of the respective situations, when they found them inevitable, are all such traits as would readily place them at par with each other. After a close study of both the above plays, we are left with the impression that, while Auśinari and Irāvati are the norms, Dhāriṇī and Mālavikā are the ideals held up to society by Kālidāsa.

Coming to the Abhijñāna Śākuntala, his last play, we find a more developed form of his technique. In his first play he only hinted at what he wished to say about women and painted different portraits as illustrations; in the second he showed more boldly the various types by contrast and pointed out by examples what is good and what is bad, and what the ideal of womanhood can be; in the third and last, the Abhijñāna Śākuntala, he shows how a girl can and has to develop to that height idealised by him and painted in the person of the noble queen Dhāriṇī. He had already tried his hand on a Vedic legend and a story with historical background. Now he takes up the story of Śākuntala, first told in the Mahābhārata, and retold later on in many other purāṇas also. The story related in the Padmapurāṇa resembles very much the Abhijñāna Śākuntala of Kālidāsa. He chose the story of a much wronged woman, a woman who stood up courageously to save the honour and rights of her son and herself in the royal assembly of her unscrupulous husband. We have to examine the original story a

little in order to understand how the poet depicts the same character in fresh colours. Śakuntalā was the true and simple daughter of mother Nature, who yielded to King Duṣyanta, and who came to the forest and tempted her.¹ After fulfilling his own desire he left her, and she waited in vain for long, expecting him to keep his parting promise. Finally, when the father sent his wedded daughter to the husband, the man like a coward denounced her as a pretender and addressed her with words unsuitable to the dignity of both himself as a king and of her who innocently and trustfully yielded to him.² But, it was a lioness awakened from sleep that faced him. She was courageous enough to face the impossible situation and to argue out the case for herself and her son.³ When all hopes were lost, and the king denounced her as a wicked woman, she answered him in a spirited way and left the palace. Her words were remarkable. She said, "I do not care to stay with you. And, even without you, oh Duṣyanta! my son will be the sovereign ruler of the world."⁴ Then heavenly words were heard which testified to the purity of Śakuntalā and restored her to her rightful place.⁵ It is this story that the poet took up. There is one more feature noticeable in this connection. There is a parallel, if it can be called a parallel, in the Rāmāyaṇa where an innocent woman is repudiated almost in the same words by her husband. The reference here is to the treatment of Sītā by Rāma after the killing of Rāvaṇa. The reactions of the women concerned were different, even as the circumstances also were different, though the purpose

1. Ma. Bh. I. 84. 1-40

2. Ma. Bh. I. 86. 28-30

3. Ma. Bh. I. 86. 35-110

4. ऋतेऽपि त्वां तु दुष्यन्त ! शैलराजावतंसिकाम् ।

चतुरन्तामिमामुर्वी पुत्रो मे पालयिष्यति ॥ Ma. Bh. I. 87-43

5. Ma. Bh. I. 88. 1-12

was the same, namely saving the name and position of the men concerned irrespective of the fate of the women. But, while the words from heaven sufficed to redeem Śakuntalā in the Mahābhārata, even the fire-ordeal was not enough to keep the noble Sītā beside Rāma in the Rāmāyaṇa. While later poets were never tired of depicting the story of Sītā in plays as well as poems without number, Kālidāsa was the only poet who dared to portray the love of Śakuntalā and to immortalize it. And even he had to make many changes in the body-plot of the play before allowing the audience of his time to see it. It is against this background that we have to examine the maiden Śakuntalā who is presented before us by Kālidāsa.

Here, we have to remember that the Padmapurāṇa gives the story of Śakuntalā almost on the same lines¹ as Kālidāsa. Almost all the characters found in the drama are also found in the Purāṇa. The loss of the signet ring, its recovery from the stomach of the *rohita* fish by the fisherman and his capture by the policeman and even the episode of the merchant who died issueless, are all found in the Padmapurāṇa. Of course, there are also noticeable differences. For example, Priyamvadā is shown to be accompanying Śakuntalā to Hastināpura.² The ring is lost by the carelessness of Priyamvadā and not unconsciously by

1. Compare the curse of Durvāsā in the Padmapurāṇa and the Abhijñanaśākuntalam :

(अ) दुर्वासा उवाच—

यं त्वं चिन्तयसे बाले मनसाऽनन्यवृत्तिना ।

विस्मरिष्यति स त्वां वै अतिथी मौनशालिनीम् ॥ Padma.

(आ) विचिन्तयन्ती यमनन्यमानसा तपोधनं वेत्ति न मामुपस्थितम् ।

स्मरिष्यति त्वां न स बोधितोऽपि सन्कथां प्रमत्तः प्रथमं कृतमिव ॥

Ab. Ś. IV. 1

2. आहूय गौतमीं वृद्धां सखीं चास्याः प्रियंवदाम् ।

उवाच दलक्षणा वाचा शिष्यो चापि महान्नतो ॥ Padma.

Śakuntalā as in the play.¹ The union of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta is managed in a very natural way by Kālidāsa. In the Purāṇa, Duṣyanta meets the boy in the hermitage of Mārīcha, where Kaśyapa arrives and reveals the identity of the boy to the king,² also telling him about the curse of Durvāsā.³

These similarities do lead to the question of precedence or otherwise of Padmapurāṇa to Kālidāsa. As this question does not directly affect the present study, it is enough to state here that the complete absence of this story in the Ānandāśrama edition of the Purāṇa may have its own significance. There are critics who argue that if the author of Padmapurāṇa was borrowing from Kālidāsa there is no justification in his omitting the excellent features of the drama. The answer seems to be in the fact that while the former is a Purāṇa intended to be written in the *paurāṇika* style, the latter is a piece of art coming from the pen of the master-poet. The least that can be said in this connection is that Padmapurāṇa-story may be a latter recension and interpolation in the body of the Purāṇa and based on the

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1. प्रियंवदाकरे न्यस्य अभिज्ञानाङ्गुलीयकम् ।
 स्नातुं सरस्वतीतीयमगाहत सुलोचना ॥
 प्रियंवदा तु तद्गृह्य वसनाञ्चलमव्यतः ।
 यावन्यस्तवती तावत्पपात सलिले द्विजाः ॥
 प्रियंवदा भिया तस्यै वृत्तान्तं न न्यवेदयत् ।
 शकुन्तलापि तत्सख्यै पप्रच्छापि न विस्मृता ॥ Padma.

2. कश्यप उवाच—

तवैव तनयो राजन् ! यमसूत शकुन्तला ।
 दमनः सर्वसत्त्वानां सिंहादीनां महाबलः ॥ Padma.

3. दुर्वाससा हि शापेन त्वया या विस्मृता पुरा ।
 त्यक्ता मेनकया नीता मयि न्यस्ता मनस्विनी ॥
 सा ते शकुन्तला राज्ञी सुषावेमं कुमारकम् ।
 महाबलो महाप्राणो दुर्घर्षः सर्वभूषणम् ॥ Padma.

Mahābhārata-story as well as the play, but written to suit the epic style.

We cannot see any comparison between that Śakuntalā who puts forward conditions¹ for her union with the King saying unabashedly, "King! all necessary equipments for marriage are available here,"² and the Śakuntalā—the timid, sweet, and soft-hearted maiden—presented to us by Kālidāsa in the hermitage of the sage Kaṇva. The magic wand of the master-poet has transformed her beyond all recognition. We feel the presence of an exquisitely sweet and charming rose-bud, which after withstanding the manifold tests and trials of this unkind world, and having learned the necessary lessons, was to blossom into the full-grown rose that would fill the whole world with its fragrance.

This Śakuntalā comes before us as the maiden, the bride, the rejected wife, the mother and, finally, the happily united wife of the great king Duṣyanta. The Śakuntalā, who is watering the plants in her hermitage along with her friends, fills our hearts with affection and wonder. She is as innocent as the animals and birds around her. She is quite happy among the forest-plants and vines, loving and serving them as her own sisters and brothers.³ At the same time, she is just awakening to new feelings and new desires, as is very subtly told to us by the episode of the *Nava-mallikā* and the *Sahakarapādapa* in the first act itself.⁴

1. यदि धर्मपथस्त्वेष यदि चात्मा प्रभुर्मम ।

प्रदाने पौरवश्रेष्ठ ! शृणु मे समयं प्रभो ॥

मम जायेत यः पुत्रः स राजा त्वदनन्तरम् ।

युवराजस्स कर्तव्यस्त्यमेतद् ब्रवीहि मे ॥

यद्येतदेवं दुष्यन्त ! अस्तु मे सङ्गमस्त्वया ॥ Ma. Bh. 1. 84. 19-20

2. वैवाहिकानि चान्यानि सर्वमस्तीह पार्थिव ॥ Ma. Bh. I. 84. 26

3. शकुन्तला—न केवलं तातनियोग एव । अस्ति मे सोदरस्नेहोऽप्येतेषु ।

4. Ab. Ś. I. Pp. 10-11

Ab. S. I. p. 9

All three of them—Śakuntalā as well as her friends—are aware of the father's desire to give her to a suitable husband.¹ This paves the way for many maidenly jokes between them², as is only natural.

Kaṇva seems to be the ideal father who has brought up his daughters well, giving them good education and training them in the proper and suitable way. To them, by God's grace, comes Duṣyanta who is a good and virtuous man, who can confidently say that his heart cannot go the improper way.³ His exclamation at the first sight of Śakuntalā,⁴ is an eye-opener to the real character of the king. He had known and enjoyed all that the city could give. Now he is confronted with some thing new, a beautiful and untouched wild-bud, which surpassed everything he had hitherto seen. His heart goes out to that innocence-incarnate. Of course, he is neither unscrupulous nor sensuous. He finds out all that he can about the beauty that has become a joy for him, before he makes his desire explicit. The first sprouts of love are in the minds of both; but both are equally tied down by their respective states and circumstances. The feelings of Śakuntalā as depicted

1. अ. सख्यौ—हला शकुन्तले ! यद्यत्राद्य तातः संनिहितो भवेत् ।

शकुन्तला—ततः किं भवेत् ।

सख्यौ—इमं जीवितसर्वस्वेनाप्यतिथिविशेषं कृतार्थं करिष्यति ।

Ab. Ś. I. p. 13

आ. प्रियंवदा—आर्य, घर्माचिरणोऽपि परवशोऽयं जनः । गुरोः पुनरस्याः

अनुरूपवरप्रदाने संकल्पः । Ab. Ś. I. p. 15

2. Instances are spread throughout the first three Acts of the Śakuntalam.

3. असंशयं क्षत्रपरिग्रहक्षमा यदार्यमस्यामभिलाषि मे मनः ।

सतां हि सन्देहपदेषु वस्तुषु प्रमाणमन्तःकरणप्रवृत्तयः ॥

Ab. Ś. I. 21

4. शुद्धान्तदुर्लभमिदं वपुराश्रमवासिनो यदि जनस्य ।

द्वीकृताः खलु गुणैरुद्यानलता वनलताभिः ॥ Ab. Ś. I. 17

here are quite remarkable. At the very beginning she realizes them to be against the purity of the penance-grove—*Tapovanavirudha*. She is not a wayward girl who would follow the impulses of her youthful heart. She is the loving and obedient daughter of a father, who was gone on a pilgrimage for her own sake. Here is the picture of the daughter as the complement of the father. The father protected the people, the trees and vines, birds and beasts and even the *Vanadevatās* from all calamities by the strength of his penance and also his love and understanding, while it was the duty of his daughters to give water to them, feed them and meet other practical needs of his dependents, movables or immovables. In his absence, it was the duty of these daughters, especially of Śakuntalā, to welcome the guests and keep up the routine of the hermitage going, as king Duṣyanta is informed by the Vaikhānasa.¹ The conversation of the three friends among themselves and their behaviour throughout the first three acts go to complete the portrayal of that noble and ideal picture of the three daughters awaiting the arrival of their beloved and honoured father. At every step, they miss their father and feel, "Oh, if only he was here!"² In spite of her strong love and desire for Duṣyanta, Śakuntalā is quite firm in her refusal to yield to him.³ It is the irresistible persuasion of the king

1. वैखानसः—इदानीमेव दुहितरं शकुन्तलामतिथिसत्काराय नियुज्य दैवमस्याः

प्रतिकूलं शमयितुं सोमतीर्थं गतः ।

Ab. Ś. I. p. 7

2. अ. अनसूया—हला शकुन्तले ! त्वत्तोऽपि तातकण्वस्याश्रमवृक्षकाः प्रियतरा
इति तर्कयामि ।

Ab. Ś. I. p. 8

आ. सख्यौ—यद्यत्राद्य तातः सन्निहितो भवेत् ।

Ab. Ś. I. p. 13

इ. धर्मचिरखेऽपि परवशोऽयं जनः । गुरोः पुनरस्याः अनु रूपवरप्रदाने
संकल्पः । Ab. Ś. I. p. 15

ई. प्रियंवदा—तात इदानीमिमं वृत्तान्तं श्रुत्वा न जाने किं प्रतिपत्स्यत इति ।

Ab. Ś. IV. p. 41

3. शकुन्तला—पौरव रक्षाविनयम् । मदनसन्तप्ताऽपि न खल्वात्मनः प्रभवामि ।

Ab. Ś. III. p. 38

along with the encouraging words and deeds of her dearest friends that finally gave her courage to write a love-letter and also to unite with him by the rites of *Gāndharva* marriage in the absence of her father.

The fourth act shows us Śakuntalā at the parting of the ways. She is a newly wed bride, filled with the thoughts of her recently separated husband. Neither the fear about the possible anger of her father, nor any doubt about the intentions of the king mars her day-dreams. She is still the innocent and trustful young girl, who has yet to learn her lessons about the world. Fate was weaving her future in unknown ways, or perhaps known only to her ever alert friends. The curse of sage Durvāsā came as a bolt from the blue, and would have burnt the blossoming bud, if not for the protective hands of the powerful father behind the scenes and the loving watchfulness of Priyamvadā and Anasūyā, who hastened to safeguard the interests of the "naturally soft hearted" friend of theirs. The father returned and relieved their anxiety about his anger by giving his unreserved blessings to the couple and also by making arrangements to send Śakuntalā to her husband. In this act we find the daughter slowly growing into the bride and then becoming the wife with the motherly instincts developing within her. Sage Kaṇva, the father, who moulds the character of this beloved daughter of his, with his advices, remarks, counsels and hearty blessings, strengthened by his penances, is ever present to complete the picture. The fraternal affection depicted in this act among not only human beings, but also the birds, beasts, trees and creepers, portrays the happy family life and the place of a beloved sister in it. The leave-taking of Śakuntalā from each one of the familiar objects,¹ the counsels of her

1. शकुन्तला—वनज्योत्स्ने ! चूतसंगताऽपि मां प्रत्यालिङ्ग इतोगताभिः शाखा-
बाहुभिः । अद्यप्रभृति दूरपरिवर्तिनी ते खलु भविष्यामि ।

father,¹ her parting words to the deer² and the request to her father,³ all clearly indicate the growth of her mind and the development of the maternal instincts in her. At the end of the fourth act, Śakuntalā leaves the cosy, protected life of the hermitage for her rightful place by the side of her husband.

The word *patnī* held a very noble meaning for Kālidāsa. He always condemned the husband who disregarded or ill-treated his wife. He is quite sure of the nobility of the wife. He fully believes that women are too kind-hearted and noble to harbour anything except love and goodwishes for everyone in their minds. The man who misuses his power over woman, given to him by herself and perhaps by society, is despicable in the eyes of the poet. There are innumerable examples of his anger and condemnation against such men in the works of Kālidāsa. It is this idea that is predominantly shown in the fifth act of the *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*. Śakuntalā had met Duṣyanta, the lover, but not the king of Hastināpura. The time seems to have come for her to see the world in its true colours and also to rise up to the occasion.

Śakuntalā, escorted by Gautamī and the two disciples of Kaṇva, enters the court presided over by king Duṣyanta.

1. कण्वः—पातुं न प्रथमं व्यवस्यति जलं युष्मास्वपीतेषु या
नादत्ते प्रियमण्डनाऽपि भवता स्नेहेन या पल्लवम् ।
आद्ये वः कुसुमप्रसूतिसमये यस्याः भवत्युत्सवः
सेयं याति शकुन्तला पतिगृहं सर्वैरनुज्ञायताम् ॥

Ab. Ś. IV. 9

2. शकुन्तला—वत्स ! किं सहवासपरित्यागिनीं मामनुसरसि । अचिरप्रसूतया
जनन्या विना वर्धित एव । इदानीमपि मया विरहितं त्वां तातश्चित्त-
यिष्यति । निवर्तस्व तावत् ।

Ab. Ś. IV. p. 52

3. शकुन्तला—तात एषोऽजपर्यन्तचारिणी गर्भमन्यरा मृगवधूर्यदा नघप्रसवा
भवति तदा मह्यं कमपि प्रियनिवेदयितृकं विसर्जयिष्यथ ।

Ab. Ś. IV. p. 51

But Duṣyanta at court is quite different from the fond lover whom we met at the hermitage. The song of Hamsapadikā¹ makes him laugh callously and remark, "Oh ! she was once loved by me. Friend, Mādhavya, go and tell her from me that I am well chided."² The whole episode, especially the above-quoted remark, seems to be an eye-opener to the general character of the king. That he loved Hamsapadikā once and then neglected her for a new favourite is of no importance to him. We begin to realise that the fears expressed by Anasūyā³ may not be out of place. Though the king had readily promised the anxious friends that "Śakuntalā, and she alone, will be the substratum of my dynasty, in spite of the fact that I have a number of wives,"⁴ there is no guarantee that he will keep the promise. His harem is full of Hamsapadikās and Vasumatīs. The society that enjoins woman to be single-heartedly devoted to her husband, was not going to blame Duṣyanta if he took one love today and left her tomorrow without hesitation, even like a Purūravas or Agnimitra. Here it is that we begin to realize the full significance of the message of Kanva to the

1. आकाशे गीयते—

अभिनवमधुलोलुपो भवांस्तथा परिचुम्ब्य चूतमञ्जरीम् ।

कमलवसतिमात्रनिर्वृतो मधुकर विस्मृतोऽस्येनां कथम् ॥

2. राजा—(स्मितं कृत्वा) सकृत्कृतप्रणयोऽयं जनः । तदस्या देवीं वसुमतीमन्तरेण मधुपालम्भमवगतोऽस्मि । सखे माधव्य मद्रचनादुच्यतां हंसपदिका—निपुण-
मुपालब्धोऽस्मीति ।

Ab. Ś. V. p. 56.

3. अनसूया—अद्य स राजर्षिरिष्टिं परिसमाप्य ऋषिभिर्विसर्जित आत्मनो नगरं प्रविश्यान्तःपुरसमागत इतो गतं वृत्तान्तं स्मरति वा न वेति ।

Ab. Ś. IV. p. 41

4. राजा—परिग्रहबहुत्वेऽपि द्वे प्रतिष्ठे कुलस्य मे ।

समुद्रवसना चोर्वी सखी च युवयोरियम् ॥

Ab. Ś. III. 17

king¹. In other words, the sage is reminding the king that Sakuntalā is not just one among the many women who fill his harem. She has her own simple and sacred back-ground. Her love is not prompted by the desire of any worldly gain or lust. The king himself is of a noble lineage, where virtues are more respected than riches. Remember all these and treat her accordingly, the sage implies.

To the Duṣyanta whom we saw in the hermitage, all these reminders may be unnecessary; but, the Duṣyanta in the court seems to belong to a different category. He is a good king. The praises of the *vaitālikas* and also his appearance have the ring of truth and sincerity. He rules according to *dharma*. But, would he, amongst this pomp and glory, remember the innocent love he enjoyed in the remote penance-grove? When the party enters his presence, he does not even look at the veiled beauty presented before him; for, it is not proper to look at another man's wife. The message of Kaṇva does not hold any meaning for him. If we had not heard the curse of Durvāsā sometime before, we would have certainly remembered the Duṣyanta of Mahābhārata without any hesitation. As it is, we are only afraid for the future of Śakuntalā. The king is in a fix. In his embarrassment, he asks Śārṅgarava, what he can do². His doubts are genuine. After all he is a man of the city. His sneering remarks are only the reflections of the idea existent in society, and also his own opinions born out of experience. Neither the humble pleadings of Gautamī, nor the indignant statements of Śārṅgarava, nor the details given by Śakuntalā about their life in the

1. कण्वः—अस्मान्साधु विचिन्त्य संयमधनानुच्चैः कुलं चात्मनः

त्वय्यस्याः कथमप्यबान्धवकृतां स्नेहप्रवृत्तिं च ताम् ।

सामान्यप्रतिपत्तिपूर्वकमियं दारेषु हृदया त्वया

भाग्यायत्तमतः परं न खलु तद्वाच्यं वधूवन्धुभिः ॥ Ab. Ś. IV. 17

2. राजा—मूढः स्यामहमेषा वा वदेन्मिथ्येति संशये ।

दारत्यागी भवाम्याहो परस्त्रीस्पर्शापांसुलः ॥ Ab. Ś. V. 29

hermitage were capable enough to break through the thick iron surface of the prejudices well set in the mind of the king. Unhesitatingly he comes out with the insinuation that women are deceitful by nature and gives the example of the cuckoo who gets its own eggs hatched by the ignorant crow.¹ The moment these words are uttered by Duṣyanta, the whole situation changes. Śakuntalā is no more the same innocent girl who was playing with the deer and the creepers in the forest. Within the past few hours, she has grown up. Her first reaction to the king's attitude was despair, a despair characterised by dignity and nobility. She thinks to herself, "why remind him (the king) of any thing now that love has changed to this indifference?"² She believes in true love, which is eternal and constant. If that is lost, then nothing matters. But the word *parbhṛtaḥ*—a child reared by others—reminds her of her duties as a mother. The shame that comes by the rejection of the king would fall not on her alone, but also on her unborn child. The wife's patience gives way to the indignation of the mother. The spontaneous words of injured innocence³ stopped the king's unbridled sneer. He is shaken out of his smug contempt for women and is forced to doubt his own contentions⁴. Duṣyanta has to bow down before this womanly dignity,

1. राजा—स्त्रीणामशिक्षितपटुत्वमानुषीषु
संदृश्यते किमुत याः प्रतिबोधवत्यः ।
प्रागन्तरिक्षगमनात्स्वमपत्यजात-
मन्यैर्द्विजैः परभृताः खलु पोषयन्ति ॥ Ab. Ś. V. 22
2. शकुन्तला—(अपवार्यं)—इदमवस्थान्तरगते तादृशेऽज्जुरागे किं वा स्मारितेन ।
Ab. Ś. V. P. 63
3. शकुन्तला—(सरोषम्)—अनार्य आत्मनो हृदयानुमानेन प्रेक्षसे । क
इदानीमन्यो धर्मकञ्चुकप्रवेशिनस्तृणच्छन्नकूपोपमस्य तवानुकृतिं प्रति-
पत्स्यते ? Ab. Ś. V. P. 64-65
4. राजा—(आत्मगतम्)—संदिग्धबुद्धिं मां कुर्वन्नकैतव इवास्याः कोपो
लक्ष्यते । Ab. Ś. V. P. 65

though his suspicions are not removed. The ascetics left Śakuntalā at the door of the king and the royal priest was prepared to give her shelter till her child was born. Even Fate could not tolerate such a disgrace to a noble woman, hence the heavenly powers intervened. In the Mahābhārata, the words of the gods vouchsafed for the purity and truthfulness of Śakuntalā. But here, the intervention came in the person of her mother Menakā, the heavenly nymph, who hearing the heart-rending cries of her daughter, took her away to a safe place, far from the hue and cry of this un-understanding world¹.

Kāma, the physical love, was predominant in the union of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta; and so it could not have culminated in the ultimate good for all. Hence this separation was necessary. From this point, Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta also, are working their way up. She has lost all desires and the only end and aim of her life now being centred in her child. As for Duṣyanta, he is not so sure of himself after that angry outburst of Śakuntalā. He has his set-back while he is at the height of his blindness. All the while he is boasting much about his firm character and virtuous life. He would not look at the veiled woman presented before him as his wife because he is not sure of the truth. He turns his eyes away and thus earns the applause of his servants². He is contemptuous about the ordinary woman and he makes no secret of his contentions. But the moment the real and pure woman asserts herself, her strength is felt and the man of the city, a hard nut though he is, begins to crack. At the end of the fifth act, we find

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1. पुरोहितः—सा निन्दन्ती स्वानि भाग्यानि बाला बाहूक्षेपं क्रन्दितुं च प्रवृत्ता ।
स्त्रीसंस्थानं चाप्सरस्तीर्थमारादुत्क्षिप्यैतां ज्योतिरेकं जगाम ॥

Ab. Ś. V. 30

2. प्रतीहारी—अहो घमविक्षिता भर्तुः । ईदृशं नाम सुखोपनतं रूपं दृष्ट्वा
कोऽन्यो विचारयति ।

Ab. Ś. V. 62

the king accepting to himself that there is something wrong somewhere. It is true, he cannot remember his marriage with the ascetic girl, still he is beginning to believe in the possibility of such a thing¹. The sin of insulting the virtuous woman, his own *Śakti*, even unconsciously, has begun to worry him.

Both Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta were burning themselves in the fire-sacrificial of sorrow and suffering. Śakuntalā's life in the Hemakūṭa was one long dark night of separation, and the dawn came in the form of Duṣyanta once again; but quite a different Duṣyanta from the one whom she saw a few years ago in the royal court. After the curse of the Sage was removed by the sight of the ring, the King had known no peace. His repentance was twofold, because he himself had spurned the luck that came to him.² The reunion of the couple is very cleverly contrived by the poet. Duṣyanta, though victorious and honoured even by gods, is sad at heart and bewailing. In the hermitage, where he is confronted with the boy Sarvadamana and the attendant ascetic women, every word of the conversation pierces his already broken heart like sharp arrows. The answer to his question regarding the father of the boy is the climax, containing within it the denouncement also³. It reminds him mercilessly of his own guilt, while almost assuring him of the possibility of the boy being his own son. Only after Śakuntalā, the humble yet dignified mother, comes to take

1. राजा—कामं प्रत्यादिष्टां स्मरामि न परिग्रहं मुनेस्तनयाम् ।

बलवत्तु द्वयमानं प्रत्यायतीव मे हृदयम् ॥ Ab. Ś. V. 39

2. अ. राजा—धिङ्मामुपस्थितश्रेयोऽवमानिनम् । Ab. Ś. V. p. 85

आ. राजा—संरोपितेऽप्यात्मनि धर्मपत्नी त्यक्ता मया नाम कुलप्रतिष्ठा ।

कल्पिष्यमाणा महते फलाय वसुन्धरा काल इवोत्तबीजा ॥

Ab. Ś. VI. 24

3. तापसी—कस्तस्य धर्मदारपरित्यागिनो नाम संकीर्तयितुं चिन्तयिष्यति ।

Ab. Ś. VIII. p. 96

her rightful place beside her son's father only after the relationship between Sarvadamana and the king is clearly established by the combination of circumstances.

Śakuntalā has now developed into the ideal that Kālidāsa wished her to be. There is a vast difference between the Śakuntalā of the first four acts and the one at the close. Her love in the beginning, though true, was still of a lower standard, more terrestrial, materialistic and self-centred. Duṣyanta, the man from the city with all his glamour, tempted her and she fell for him. She was so much engrossed in her lover that she was lost to the rest of the world. The punishment was instantaneous. She was fated to be rejected by the man for whose stake she sacrificed her everything, and she was redeemed only after the long penance and single-hearted devotion to that husband for a period of more than seven or eight years. This was necessary to purge her love of its materialistic elements and make it divine, and also to raise her to the highest seat of glory, that of the mother. Duṣyanta also had burned himself in the furnace of repentance and befitted himself to be the partner of the newly evolved Śakuntalā, and thus the couple again met at the Hemakūṭa. There was a great difference between this union and the first one. The first was a secret, known only to both of them and the friends of Śakuntalā, and hence giving rise to fear, doubt and suspicion. But this last union is the result of great penance on the part of both. Not only this union is contrived by the gods, but is blessed by the parents of the universe, Dakṣayānī and Mārīcha. In this union Kālidāsa holds up to the world his ideal of marriage, as is clearly stated in the words of Mārīcha, who says, "fortunately, the noble Śakuntalā, this noble child and yourself are united even as the triad—faith, fortune and sacrifice—are."¹ According to the ancient

1. मारीचः—दिष्ट्या शकुन्तला साध्वी सदपत्यमिदं भवान् ।

श्रद्धा वित्तं विधिश्चेति त्रितयं तत्समागतम् ॥ Ab. Ś. VII. 29

scriptures as well as the law-givers, the second *Āśrama* is considered to be the best of all,¹ for herein is the fulfilment of life. The union of the *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* is essential for the perpetuation of the universe. This union of the *Satpatnī*, *Sadapatyaṃ* and *Satpumān*, to perform the greatest of all sacrifices, namely, life for the good of others, *Jivana-yajña*, has been accomplished, and every thing ends well. Thus, in this last play of his, Kālidāsa, while representing the world, has also held up the ideal of life, as he would have it, centering round the ideal woman.

Apart from the heroines around whom centered all the other characters in the plot and the atmosphere of the plays, there are many other women portrayed by Kālidāsa in his works. The drama being the depiction and representation of the world, it is but natural that all kinds of people find a place in it. And Kālidāsa has not left out any type. Even in portraying the ideals, he has been careful to observe the various possible types. He has painted Auśinārī, Dhārīṇī, Irāvātī, Mālavikā, Urvaśī and Śakuntalā, each a different type. It holds true for the other female-characters too.

Of the maidens presented by Kālidāsa, Anasūyā and Priyamvadā attract our attention next to Śakuntalā herself. Though equally loving, simple and straightforward, these two show a definite contrast to each other by their behaviour and the very nature of their quality and method of conversation. Anasūyā is mature, serious and more understanding, whereas Priyamvadā, true to her name, is more

1. अ. तद्धि सर्वाश्रमाणां मूलमुदाहरन्ति । Ma. Bh. Śāntiparva. 179. 17

आ. यथा वायं समाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्वजन्तवः ।

तथा गृहस्थमाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्व आश्रमाः ॥

यस्मात्त्रयोऽप्याश्रमिणो ज्ञानेनान्तेन चान्वहम् ।

गृहस्थेनैव धार्यन्ते तस्माज्ज्येष्ठाश्रमो गृही ॥

Manu. III. 77-78

jolly, clever and resourceful. Anasūyā seems to be the personification of tranquility, thoughtfulness and consideration, while Priyamvadā is bubbling with laughter, fun and frolic. She is foremost in teasing her friend, and loses no chance to try the same with the king also. To Priyamvadā Śakuntalā confesses her love-sickness, but it is to Anasūyā that she turns to when she is in need of real help. It is interesting to note that Anasūyā is the one who tells the story of Śakuntalā's birth and heritage to Duṣyanta, while it is the clever conversation of Priyamvadā that helps the king to come into the open with his offer of love. The dialogue between the two at the beginning of the fourth act is characteristic of their different temperaments. Anasūyā is more practical and worldly-wise. Priyamvadā is more trusting and simple. While the former is much worried about what Duṣyanta would do after reaching the palace, the latter is quite sure that, "such beautiful forms cannot be devoid of nobility."¹ She is only afraid of the possible displeasure of their father, simple-minded that she is, and Anasūyā with her mature understanding, assures her with reasonable arguments that there need not be any fear about the blessings of the sage. Again, it is Anasūyā who remembers the customary worship of the *Saubhāgya-devatā* which the light-hearted Priyamvadā overlooks. But, when it is a question of pacifying the quick-tempered Durvāsā, Anasūyā at once deposes the sweet-tempered Priyamvadā, thus showing her own confidence in the resourcefulness of her friend. Both of them are equally devoted to Śakuntalā and their one end and aim of life seems to be the happiness and welfare of their friend. The love of these two devoted friends for Śakuntalā is unparalleled in the mortal world.

Bakulāvalikā, Nipunikā, Jyotsnikā and Kaumudikā in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* and Nipunikā in the *Vikramorvaśīya*

1. प्रियंवदा—न तादृशा आकृतिविशेषा गुणविरोधिनो भवन्ति ।

are a few other female characters depicted by Kālidāsa. Though maids-in-waiting of the different courts, each one of these has a characteristic of her own that distinguishes her from the rest. For example, Bakulāvalikā, though only a maid-in-attendance to the queen, shows clear traits of culture and refinement. Her conversation with Mālavikā in the third act,¹ and at other similar occasions, shows a keen intellect and shrewd understanding on her part. When Mālavikā enjoins her to be always helpful to her if she comes to grief in her desire for the king,² her answer is very remarkable. She says,—“I am Bakulāvalikā, the flower which emits more fragrance, the more it is crushed.”³ The girl seems to have an insight into the characters of those whom she loves and serves. When Mālavikā despairs about the fulfilment of her desires, Bakulāvalikā reassures her friend saying that the queen is true to her words.⁴ That one sentence of Bakulāvalikā tells a lot to the close student. Her loyalty and devotion to the queen, and also the reverence and esteem in which the latter was held by all around her, is shown clearly in this sentence. The resourcefulness, cleverness, quick repartee and the refined nature of this young girl leave a deep and lasting impression of affection and admiration in our minds. Nipunikā, the friend and maid-in-attendance on Irāvati, and also the Nipunikā in attendance on queen Auśinārī, are more or less similar to each other, and both of them remind us of the women who enjoy creating troubles in the ordinary life. It is remarkable that in the earlier dramas, the number of such women is almost

1. Mā Ag. III. p. 215-217

2. मालविका—त्वं तावद्दुजतिं गच्छतः सहायिनी भव ।

Mā. Ag. III. p. 217

3. बकुलावलिका—विमर्दसुरभिर्बकुलावलिका खल्वहम् ।

Mā. Ag. III. p. 217

4. बकुलावलिका—आश्वसितुं सखी । सत्यप्रतिज्ञा देवी ।

Mā. Ag. IV. p. 239

nil. The number of characters in the dramas hitherto studied was limited to the indispensable roles only. It is Kālidāsa who, for the first time, brought on the stage every type of character that represents society-life in general. The Nipuṇikā, Kaumudikā and Jyotsnikā whom we meet in the harem of either Purūravas or Agnimitra are not at all strangers to us, for we seem to remember familiar faces, when they confront us or we hear them talk.

Citrālekḥā and Sānumatī form another pair of unique women presented to us by the master-poet. Both of them are celestial women, brought to the mortal world due to their love for their respective friends. But here ends their similarity. Sānumatī is the friend of Menakā, the heroine's mother. Though celestial, she is quite human in her feelings and behaviour. She refuses to use her super-human powers even to know the real condition of the king, but decides to see everything by the natural means available to mortals also. Hence, she herself goes to the palace of Duṣyanta to find out how he fared after rejecting Śakuntalā. Her divinity does not make her immune to the human feelings natural to a woman, or a mother. She being the friend of Menakā, her feelings towards Śakuntalā are motherly, and she feels happy at the sufferings of the king, because that foreshadowed the happy reunion of Śakuntalā with him. Though seen for a few minutes, Sānumatī earns our love and respect without any reservation. Citrālekḥā, the friend of Urvaśī, is quite a different personage. She loves Urvaśī, and helps her to attain her desire when she finds that the latter cannot be dissuaded from her infatuation. At the same time, it is quite clear that Citrālekḥā does not at all approve of her friend's love for a terrestrial being, however, great he may be. She is a true friend, wise and resourceful counsellor, and ever-alert helper to Urvaśī.

There are a few women of the ascetic type also presented to us by Kālidāsa. Satyavatī, Gautamī, Suvratā and

her companions, Dākṣāyaṇī and Parivrājikā come before us as equally lovable, dignified and commanding our respect. Still, their characteristic difference of individualities is so obvious that it is impossible to miss it. Mother Gautamī, a pure and simple soul, makes us bow down before her in reverence. She is a straightforward and loving old woman. The clever way in which the girls dodge her in the bower, her concern for the health of Śakuntalā, the simple remedies she prescribes for the ailment about which she knows nothing, her vain attempts at the court to convince Duṣyanta of the truthfulness and purity of her foster-daughter, and her pathetic appeal to Śārṅgarava about Śakuntalā's plight, all make her so dear to us that we actually miss her in the later acts, specially when everything ends happily. The poet himself seems to be paying homage to the pure and innocent old lady who is the personification of motherly love.

Dākṣāyaṇī and Satyavatī are both wives of ascetics who lived in the hermitage. The first is the mother of the gods and thus revered by the whole universe. Naturally, there cannot be any comparison between her and Satyavatī, the wife of a comparatively lesser sage, Cyavana. As the foster-mother of Āyus, Satyavatī fulfils her role quite well. But, no stretch of imagination can make us visualize her as being able to look after Sarvadamana. Suvratā, her companion, and even the mother of the universe, together, do not seem to be a match for that spirited boy.

Parivrājikā, in the Mālavikāgnimitra, stands quite by herself in the whole arena of Sanskrit dramatic literature. Of course, there are Sāṅkṛtyāyaṇī, portrayed by Śrī Harṣa, and Kāmaṇḍakī and others portrayed by Bhavabhūti later on. But, Paṇḍita Kauśikī is a unique personage who fulfils her role as the protector of Mālavikā without in any way losing the dignity of the ascetic robes she had accepted when she became a helpless widow. She is a learned lady of noble

birth, the sister of no less a person than the minister of a state. According to her own statement, she was left helpless after the death of her brother who was accompanying Mālavikā to Vidiśā. As a consequence, she took to the ascetic life and by chance, entered the harem of Agnimitra. She enjoyed the respect and affection of both the king and the queen. She seems to be a very scholarly woman, well informed in *Dharma* and *Nīti*. Her benediction to the king,¹ her clever statement assuring the queen about the greatness of the latter,² and similar others, are good examples of her knowledge and wisdom. When she is asked as to the defects in the performance of Mālavikā, she answers, "the meanings of the words were intimated well by the correct and significant movements of the limbs; the steps were in tune with the music; there was full identification of the various sentiments; the gentle actions with the hands were graceful and the different emotions, developing one from the other, kept up the interest continuously. In short, every thing was perfect."³ This shows her deep knowledge of the art of dance beyond any doubt. The king himself is profuse in his praise for her. Once he says, "You are, indeed,

1. परिव्राजिका—महासारप्रसवयोः सहशक्षमयोर्द्वयोः ।

धारिणीभूतधारिण्योर्भव भर्ता शरच्छतम् ॥

Mā. Ag. I. 15

2. परिव्राजिका—अतिमात्रभासुरत्वं पुष्यति भानोः परिग्रहादनलः ।

अधिगच्छति महिमानं चन्द्रोऽपि निशापरिगृहीतः ॥

Mā. Ag. I. 13

3. परिव्राजिका—यथादृष्टं सर्वमनवद्यम् । कुतः—

अङ्गैरन्तर्निहितवचनैः सूचितः सम्यगर्थः

पादन्यासो लयमनुगतस्तन्मयत्वं रसेषु ।

शाखायोनिमृदुरभिनयस्तद्विकल्पानुवृत्तौ

भावो भावं नुदति विषयाद्रागबन्धः स एव ॥

Mā. Ag. II. 8

Pandita—the learned—Kauśikī.”¹ Her knowledge and wisdom are accepted by all as is proved by the fact that both the dancing masters were completely agreeable to her being the judge in the discussions as well as the performances that would go to decide their quarrel. She was a good story-teller, and she is seen as a trusted and respected companion of the queen. She knew something about medicine also. For, when the Vidūṣaka was said to have been bitten by a snake, she suggested cutting off that finger, and quoted authority also for the same. Of course, we cannot be sure whether she was pulling his legs or was really serious, when she said, “The first thing to be done, at such times, is to cut off the bitten place. So, let that be done here.”² But, there cannot be any question about the knowledge that prompted that statement. She seems to have been an expert in dressing and make-up also, as could be judged from the fact that the queen made her responsible for decorating Mālavikā in the bridal attire, when she wanted to give her away to the king in marriage.³

One thing here is worth noticing. The Parivrājikā might have been an unattached Buddhist nun till she entered the apartment of the queen Dhārīṇī, and met Mālavikā in the guise of a maid-in-waiting. But, after that, she does everything in her power to fulfil the mission of her deceased brother. She does not reveal the identity of Mālavikā,

1. राजा—पण्डितकौशिकी खलु भगवती । पक्षपातिनावहं देवी च ।

Mā. Ag. I. p. 193

2. परिव्राजिका—तेन हि दंशच्छेदः पूर्वकर्मैति श्रूयते । स तावदस्य क्रियताम् ।

छेदो दंशस्य दाहो वा क्षतेर्वा रक्तमोक्षणम् ।

एतानि दष्टमात्राणामायुष्याः प्रतिपत्तयः ॥

Mā. Ag. IV. 4

3. विदूषकः—अद्य किल देव्यैवं पण्डितकौशिकी भणिता—भगवति यत्त्वं प्रसाधनगर्वं वहसि तद्दर्शय मालिकायाः शरीरे विवाहनेपथ्यमिति । तया सविशेषालंकृता मालविका ।

Mā. Ag. V. p. 243

because she remembers the prophecy about the girl's fate of being a servant for one year before getting married to a suitable husband.¹ The Vidūṣaka knowingly or otherwise makes a remark when she enters the scene for the first time, "Here comes the queen Dhārīṇī, accompanied by the learned Kauṣikī, who is the Pīṭhamardikā.² And really speaking the Parivrājikā is the Pīṭhamardikā³—the helper—to Mālavikā in the play. She is fully responsible for bringing Mālavikā to the presence of the king. It is she who says that the art of dancing being more practical than theoretical, a debate between the two masters is of no use.⁴ It is she again, who provokes Gaṇadāsa to insist on producing Mālavikā on the stage, by her seemingly casual statement that only he can claim to be a good teacher who is equally good at teaching as well as performing himself.⁵ It is she who suggests the

1. परिव्राजिका—इयं पितरि जीवति केनापि देवयात्रागतेन सिद्धादशकेन साधुना मत्समक्षं समादिष्टा—आसंवत्सरमात्रमियं प्रेष्यभावमनुभूय ततः सदृशभर्तृगामिनी भविष्यतीति । तदेवं भाविनमादेशमस्यास्त्वत्पादशुश्रूषया परिणमन्तमवेक्ष्य कालप्रतीक्षया मया साधु कृतमिति पश्यामि ।

Mā. Ag. V. p. 249

2. विदूषकः—अयि उपस्थिता देवी पीठमर्दिकां पण्डितकौशिकीं पुरस्कृत्य तत्र भवती धारिणी ।

Mā. Ag. I. p. 192

3. (अ) दूरानुवर्तिनि स्यात्तस्य प्रासङ्गिकेतिवृत्ते तु ।

किञ्चित्तद्गुणहीनः सहाय एवास्य पीठमर्दिव्यः ॥ S. D. III. 39

- (ब) पीठेति । कार्यविशेषेऽधिकृतत्वात् पीठं मृद्नातीति पीठमर्द इत्यन्वर्था संज्ञा । सा स्त्री पीठमर्दिका । Commentary on above.

4. परिव्राजिका—देव ! प्रयोगप्रधानं हि नाट्यशास्त्रम् । किमत्र वाग्व्यवहारेण ।

Mā. Ag. I. p. 193

5. परिव्राजिका—शिष्टा क्रिया कस्यचिदात्मसंस्था

संक्रान्तिरन्यस्य विशेषयुक्ता ।

यस्योभयं साधु स शिक्षकाणां

धुरि प्रतिष्ठापयितव्य एव ॥

Mā. Ag. I. 16

type of the dance and the piece to be sung by the disciples which, when actually performed, appeared to be a direct request from Mālavikā to the king. The piece chosen has its own significance, when we remember the position of Mālavikā in the service of the queen, which is very similar to that of Śarmiṣṭhā, the author of the song. The only difference is that while Devayānī purposely kept princess Śarmiṣṭhā as the servant, Dhāriṇī does not have any such idea at all. For all appearances, Parivrājikā is just and impartial in all her statements but it is not difficult to see how skilfully she was contriving the situation to a very definite purpose. Nor is the queen deceived by appearances as could be understood from her statement, "why are you trying to treat me as asleep while I am wide awake?"¹ When all ends well and the union of Mālavikā with the king is achieved, Parivrājikā wishes to retire, and she is held back only by the loving and insistent persuasions of the King and the Queen.

Perhaps, Parivrājikā is a representative of the noble women who took to ascetic life and lived as dependent on the aristocratic or royal families. Buddhism and Jainism were the two religious sects who allowed their women to leave the hearth and home to take up ascetic life. Of course, Manu and the other Hindu law-givers allow the four *Āśramas* for the people. In the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, we have instances of the queens retiring to the forest when they wanted to withdraw from the worldly life. For example, Kuntī and Gāndhārī retired to the forest with Dhṛtarāṣṭra, after the Pāṇḍavas were settled in the kingdom.² In the Svapnavāsavadattā of Bhāsa we have seen that the mother of princess Padmāvatī had retired to the hermitage when she became a widow and when her son was ruling.

1. देवी—(जनान्तिकम्) मूढे परिव्राजिके मां जाग्रतीमपि सुप्तमिव करोषि ।

Mā. Ag. I. p. 195

2. Ma. Bh. XIV.

In the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, Kaṇva is heard consoling Śakuntalā that she could come back to the hermitage after her son was grown up enough to rule the kingdom. There are repeated references to the four *Āśramas* in the works of Kālidāsa. In the *Vikramorvaśīya*, Purūravas told his son that it was high time he entered the second *āśrama*, since he had finished the first one.¹ He himself expresses the wish to retire to *Vāṇaprastha*, when he sees that he is going to be deprived of the company of Urvaśī.² But, Parivrājikā is the unique instance of a woman who, though retired, still takes an interest in worldly affairs. She seems to be a link between the waning Buddhism and the rapidly reviving Hinduism. She is a respectable person who keeps up her dignity. Later on, we find similar characters who play the same role, but who show much deterioration, due to their dependence on aristocratic families. There is no direct mention of Buddhism in the works of Kālidāsa. Parivrājikā is an ascetic lady; but there is nothing to show that she was a Buddhist nun.

We have mentioned of fasts and rites performed by women in general. We saw this in the plays of Bhāsa and Śudraka in the previous chapter. The works under study at present also show the same customs. Queen Dhārīṇī is giving out Dakṣiṇā to Brāhmanaṣas for the protection and long life of her son Vasumitra. The reference of Horse-Sacrifice is also found here. Queen Auśīnarī, in the *Vikramorvaśīya*, is seen performing the *priyānuprasādana vrata* to gain the love of her husband and, here, the method of performing the

1. राजा—अयि वत्स उषितं त्वया पूर्वस्मिन्नाश्रमे । द्वितीयमध्यासितुं तव समयः ।
V. U. V. p. 176

2. राजा—न हि सुलभवियोगा कर्तुमात्मप्रियाणि
प्रभवति परवत्ता शासने तिष्ठ भर्तुः ।
अहमपि तव सूनावद्य विन्यस्य राज्यं
विचस्तिमृगयूथान्याश्रयिष्ये वनानि ॥ V. U. V. 71

same also is described incidentally. According to the *Āśrama-vyavasthā*, women were allowed to retire to the third *āśrama* with their husbands, or alone, if widows. Buddhism, as we know, allowed women to become nuns. Later, it is possible that women began to take the orange robe even without embracing Buddhism. Sītā is described by Kālidāsa as clad in an orange robe when she entered the *Rājasabhā* to take her last oath.¹ It is to be remembered here that there is no mention of this in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and it is Kālidāsa who, for the first time, refers to Sītā as wearing this dress. This perhaps supports our conclusion that at the time when Kālidāsa wrote, women who had nothing to bind them to this worldly life took to this dress, which had come to be considered as a symbol of retirement, and led a life useful to others.

We have already seen that Kālidāsa always wrote with a purpose. Every one of his characters has a message to give to those who listen. This is true in the case of Parivrajikā also. As long as those ascetic women limited their activities to the spiritual life alone, there was no harm done. But human nature being what it is, it was not always possible for even those detached people to keep out of all kinds of temptations. As in the case of Mālavikā, instances may arise which can drag these women into the worldly life once again. It is possible that the highly revered spiritual life may deteriorate and become a mask for selfish activities. Kālidāsa, with his natural instincts, seems to be lifting a warning finger against such activities, and the warning seems to be amply justified, when we remember similar characters in the later plays, such as Kāmandakī and her disciples.

The other female characters are only the door-keepers and the attendants in the palaces. Of these, there is one character, who is peculiar—the *Yavani*—the keeper of the

1. काषायपरिवीतेन स्वपदार्पितचक्षुषा ।

अन्वमीयत शुद्धेति शान्तेन वपुषैव सा ॥

Raghuvamśam. XV. 77

weapons of king Purūravas and also of Duṣyanta. Kālidāsa is the only poet, up to this time, who mentions *Yavanī*. This word has been taken by some critics to mean a Greek woman. It need not be necessarily so. When the Aryan conquest took place, the people who were conquered, were reduced to slaves and each was given suitable work to do. It is only natural that wild people are well versed in the use of weapons, especially because of their hunting habits and warlike nature. It is a well-known fact that these people of Nature are proverbially trustworthy and loyal. It is also a fact that these women were experts in the use of weapons. So, there is nothing wrong in concluding that they were given the custody of weapons. The Bhils of Rājasthān, the Kurichyars of Malabar, and the mountaineers of the Tamilnād provide examples of women, expert in the use of weapons. Only trustworthy people can be given the custody of weapons, for obvious reasons. The very fact that *Kirātī* is used as a synonym of *Yavanī* also goes a long way to support the conclusion that we have arrived at. We have other examples of the same word, *Yavanī*, used in many places to indicate 'non-Āryan', without any special reference to the Greeks. In the Pāṇinīya Sūtras also we have the word explained¹. After this time, we have references to the same *Yavanī* in the capacity of the nearest servant of the king.

The harems of all the three kings seem to have many women as attendants. Apart from the old chamberlaine, all other attendants are young and beautiful women. The natural conclusion is that women in general did take up employment in aristocratic families as servants, keepers of

1. इन्द्रवरुणभवशर्वरुद्रमृडहिमारण्ययववनमातुलाचार्याणामानुक् । एतेषामानुगागमः स्यान्डीष् च । या तु स्वयमेवाध्यापिका तत्र वा डीष् वाच्यः । उपाध्यायी उपाध्याया । आचार्या स्वयं व्याख्यात्री । यवाद्दोषे यवनाल्लिप्याम् । यवनस्य पत्नी यवनी ।

gardens, door-keepers and attendants; and the society thought nothing wrong about it. All the later dramas also have serving women of this type. But all the women attendants presented by Kālidāsa have the same peculiarity. Though similar in character and conduct, each one of them has a special trait of her own suited to the atmosphere of the play in which she characterises, and also to the heroine thereof. For example, while Nipuṇikā befits queen Auśīnarī, and the other Nipuṇikā suits Irāvātī, we cannot imagine either of them as a friend to Mālavikā. Bakulāvalikā alone seems to befit that position. Similarly, Kaumudikā, Madhukarikā and Jyotsnikā are the girls who can serve queen Dhārīṇī, while Parabhṛtikā and Madhukarikā seem to be quite befitting to the inner courts of Duṣyanta, presided at that time by queen Vasumatī and full of ladies like Hamsapadikā.

M. R. Kale, in his introduction to the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, says, "The Plays of Kālidāsa, on the whole, do not aim at giving a realistic picture of the society of his times." But, the first two plays of the poet do not at all bear out that statement. On the other hand, they very clearly represent the society with all its good and evil. In *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, there are instances that go to prove the above statement of Kale. Still, the true and natural representation of the society is too obvious to be missed even there. The women in the harem, the fun and frolic of young girls, the innocent and pure life of the hermitage, the king and his court, the fisherman and the policemen are all glimpses of real life in society.

Kālidāsa was not only a scholar, or a thinker. He was a man of Nature. Nature and natural beauty fascinated him. He was a seer—a *draṣṭā*, but he was also a creator—a *sraṣṭā*¹. Having seen and known everything, he was not

1. अपारे काव्यसंसारे कविरेकः प्रजापतिः ।

यथास्मै रोचते विश्वं तथेदं परिवर्तते ॥

satisfied with all that he saw. Being a poet of nature, he desired perfection everywhere, even as in nature. It was not enough for him that he saw things; he wanted the world also to see and realise what he himself saw. This desire he fulfilled in his dramas, slowly. The deteriorating condition of women in society seems to have been prominent in his mind when he wrote his first play. And he seems to have been quite sure that the society itself could not hold long, if this deterioration was not stemmed; because it was his firm belief that woman was really the better-half that constituted the society; and where she is not honoured, no good can happen. He seems to be a staunch believer in the dictum of Manu, "where the women are honoured, there the gods live; and where they are not revered, all rites are futile."¹ Though he was sure of what he wanted to tell the people, it seems he was not sure of the manner in which his ideas would be received by them. Hence, he portrayed the society as he saw it in his first play. The deteriorating condition of the society seems to be rather prominent in the *Vikramorvaṣīya*. In the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, there seems to be the real condition pictured side by side with the ideals that could be.

In the *Vikramorvaṣīya*, the position of woman as wife is emphasised, and the plight of the *puruṣa* devoid of his proper companion is shown, as has been already discussed. In the *Mahābhārata*, it is stated that the king is responsible for his times.² The time portrayed by Kālidāsa is that of monarchy when the divinity of the ruler was fully accepted. The ministers looked after the affairs of the state with the

1. यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ।

यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः ॥ Manu. III. 56

2. कालो वा कारणं राज्ञो राजा वा कालकारणम् ।

इति ते संशयो मा भूत् राजा कालस्य कारणम् ॥

Ma. Bh. XIII. 63. 101

final approval of the king. Even as the king of gods, Indra enjoyed life in the heavens surrounded by innumerable nymphs, so also the kings in this world enjoyed life, surrounded by a number of women. Polygamy seems to be the order of the day, as is evidenced by all the three plays. Though we hear of only the chief queen of Purūravas, there is reason enough to believe that he had a full harem. Agni-mitra seems to be a past master in the fickleness of his affections. Duṣyanta also is no exception. The chief favourite today may be a back number tomorrow. Irāvatis and Haṁsapadikās were not uncommon. The only way for the ordinary woman to keep her dignity was to accept the inevitable, as queen Auśīnarī did by her *priyānuprasādana vrata*, and leave the scene vacant for the new favourite.

But there is one redeeming feature for the woman. If she was the mother of a son, her position was secure. Childlessness was considered to be the result of sin, and the householder without a son went deep down to hell. Hence, it was only natural that the woman who saved her husband by giving him a son was honoured above all. This reverence to the mother of the son is emphasized by Kālidāsa again and again. Purūravas was woe-stricken due to his childlessness after he returned with Urvaśī from the forest.¹ Duṣyanta's repentance in rejecting Śakuntalā was aggravated by the remembrance that she was about to become a mother. And, in Mālavikāgnimitra, the position of queen Dhārinī as the happy mother of a heroic son, shines by contrast. Here again, Kālidāsa seems to hold up the ruling of

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1. विदूषकः — दिष्ट्या चिरस्य कालस्योर्वशीसहायो नन्दनवनप्रमुखेषु देवतारण्येषु विहृत्य प्रतिनिवृत्तः प्रियवयस्यः । प्रविश्य नगरमिदानीं ससत्कारोपचारैः प्रकृतिभिरनुरज्यमानो राज्यं करोति । सन्तानत्वं वर्जयित्वा न किमप्यस्य हीनम् ।

Manu as to the greatness of the mother.¹

In *Mālavikāgnimitra*, the condition of women in society and the general conditions are more clear to the student. In both the first plays, we are taken round the royal courts and surroundings only, the one deviation being in the wanderings of Purūravas in the forest searching for his beloved. Those seem to be the days when the king was considered as the mainstay of the kingdom, and the subjects followed the ideals set by their king. The dictum, "as the king, so the subjects,"² perhaps held the day, and that is why the master-poet satisfied himself by creating literature that centred round one king and the other. In the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Rāmāyaṇa*, we have a passage in which the people discussing about the rule of Rāma say, "How can he accept back a woman who lived long in another man's house ? We also will have to do the same thing; we will have to bear with our wives also, because what the king does has to be followed by the people."³ There may not be anything wrong if we conclude that the same idea held good when Kālidāsa wrote, and he is justified in depicting the aristocratic life which sets examples to the people in general.

At the time when Kālidāsa wrote, the freedom of women seems to exist in name only. The dictum of Manu, that, "in childhood, the father protects the girl, in youth the husband, and in old age, she is protected by her son; the woman does not deserve freedom,"⁴ seems to be observed in

1. उपाध्यायान्दशाचार्य आचार्याणां शतं पिता ।

सहस्रं तु पितृन्माता गौरवेणातिरिच्यते ॥ Manu. II. 145

2. राज्ञि धर्मिणि धर्मिष्ठाः पापे पापाः समे समाः ।

लोकास्तमनुवर्तन्ते यथा राजा तथा प्रजाः ॥ S. R. Bh. 119

3. अस्माकमपि दारेषु सहनीयं भविष्यति ।

यथा हि कुस्ते राजा प्रजास्तमनुवर्तते ॥ V. R. VII. 43-19

4. पिता रक्षति कोमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।

रक्षन्ति स्थविरे पुत्रा न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हन्ति ॥ Manu. IX. 3

its most narrow meaning possible then. The general condition of women, as portrayed in these plays is rather quite unsatisfactory. They do enjoy life in the ordinary sense of the word. They eat, sleep and are merry as long as they are loved by their lords. Then, they are very much respected by the people around also. But the fancy of the man is so fickle that the favour may lapse at any moment. Of course, these women have nothing to complain in their everyday life physically. As long as they follow the ordinary code of life existing in society, they get food and shelter in their husbands' homes. But the real companionship and emotional satisfaction implied by the word *sahadharma-cārīṇī* seem to exist only in words. The husband did what he liked and the *sahadharma-cārāṇa* amounted to the implicit obedience and quiet acceptance of his will by the wife. Their position being so insecure, the women jealously guarded the affections of their husbands and were overwhelmed with anger and sorrow at the mere suggestion of a possible rival. This was only natural, because a new love of the husband meant the definite dethronement of the former favourite for all practical purposes. Of course, the man was expected to treat all his wives equally and the *antaḥpura-dākṣiṇya* was considered an essential quality for a gentleman. But it is absurd to expect actual observance of this rule in a human being, however noble and broad-minded he may be. A man infatuated by one beauty can never do justice to his other wives, however dear they might have been to him before. Kālidāsa emphasizes this point repeatedly. Purūravas says to his friend, "Hundreds of gallant words from the mouth of the lover do not propitiate the beloved if they lack in genuineness, even as the gem with artificial colouring does not deceive the one who has the knowledge of real precious stones."¹ Agnimitra repeats the same

1. राजा—प्रियवचनकृतोऽपि योषितां दयितजनानुनयो रसादहे ।

प्रविशति हृदयं न तद्विदां मणिरिव कृत्रिमरागयोजितः ॥ V. U. II. 21

idea to Gautama while saying about with propitiating Irāvati.¹ Irāvati herself says in one place that the king is only like a picture of himself because his mind is fixed elsewhere.² This being the general condition, it is only natural that the relations of a newly-wed girl become apprehensive as to her fate in the husband's house. It is this anxiety that is echoed in the words of Anasūyā to Duṣyanta³ and also in the message that Kaṇva sends to the king.⁴

In Mālavikāgnimitra and Abhijñānaśākuntala, young girls of marriageable age are portrayed by Kālidāsa. They are loved and adored by their people. The education imparted to girls, in the court of Agnimitra, seems to be limited to dance, music and other fine arts. The end and aim of their lives seem to be to please their husbands and their education is mainly to make them attractive enough for this purpose. The presence of Haradatta and Gaṇadāsa at the court of Agnimitra, under the patronage of the king and queen respectively, and also the sending of artists as presents to the king by Vīrasena, whenever he won a battle, are examples of the encouragement given to the various arts by

1. राजा—वयस्य, निसर्गनिपुणाः स्त्रियः । कथमन्यसंक्रान्तहृदयमुपलालयन्त-
मपि ते सखी न मां लक्षयिष्यति । अतः पश्यामि ।
उचितः प्रणयो वरं विहन्तुं बहवः खण्डनहेतवो हि दृष्टाः ।
उपचारविधिर्मेनस्विनीनां न तु पूर्वाम्यधिकोऽपि भावशून्यः ॥

Mā. Ag. III. 3

2. इरावती—मुग्धे यादृशश्चित्रगतो ननु तादृश एवान्यसंक्रान्तहृदय आर्यपुत्रः ।
केवलमुपचारातिक्रमं प्रमाजितुमयमारम्भः । Mā. Ag. IV. p. 235

3. अनसूया—वयस्य बहुवल्लभा राजानः भूयन्ते । यथा नौ प्रियसखी बन्धु-
जनशोचनीया न भवति तथा निर्वर्तय । Ab. Ś. III. p. 37

4. अस्मान्साधु विचिन्त्य संयमधनानुच्चैः कुलं चात्मन-
स्त्वय्यस्याः कथमप्यबान्धवकृतां स्नेहप्रवृत्तिं च ताम् ।

सामान्यप्रतिपत्तिपूर्वकमियं दारेषु दृश्यात्वया

भाग्यायत्तमतः परं न खलु तद्वाच्यं बधूबन्धुभिः ॥ Ab. Ś. IV. 17.

the kings, ministers and other aristocratic families. The episode of Kaumudikā and Jyotsnikā,¹ the example of Irāvati, who belonged to the retinue of the queen, rising to the position of the beloved of the king; the maid Bakulāvalikā being taught the art of decorating by the king himself,² are all examples to the point. The last example goes to prove that the education of girls included the art of decorating the house, the gardens and also the person. As has been already noticed, Parivrājikā was also an expert in these arts, and we may rightly conclude that she learned these things when she was a young girl at the house of her father, the minister Mādhavasena.

In the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, we observe something different. The three young girls introduced to us here are born and bred in the hermitage. Though growing up among deer and peacocks, trees and creepers, seers and saints, none of them is illiterate or ignorant. Their conversations among themselves and also with others, their behaviour, their treatment of the unknown guest who presented himself to them, all go to prove their high education and culture. They have good knowledge of the epics and purāṇas, keen power of understanding and application, and a good poetic sense. Besides, they are indeed very clever. Even in their teasing remarks to each other we get many examples to prove their wisdom, wit and humour. While Śākuntalā complains to Anasūyā that Priyamvadā had tied the upper garment too

1. अ. सारसिकः—दूतश्च तेन महासाराणि रत्नानि वाहनानि शिल्पकारिका-
भूयिष्ठं परिजनमुपायनीकृत्य भर्तुः सकाशं प्रेषित इति ।

Mā. Ag. V. p. 241

- आ. कञ्चुकी—विदर्भविषयोपायने द्वे शिल्पकारिके मार्गपरिश्चमादलघु-
शरीरे इति पूर्वं न प्रवेशिते । सम्प्रति देवोपस्थानयोग्ये संवृत्ते ।

Mā. Ag. V. p. 245

2. मालविका—केन प्रसाधनकलायामभिनीतासि ।

बकुलावलिका—अत्र खलु भर्तुः शिष्यास्मि ।

Mā. Ag. III. p. 215

tightly, the ready repartee comes from *Priyamvadā*—"the blame should go entirely to your ever-growing youth. Why blame me for it?"¹ On another occasion, while *Priyamvadā* compliments her saying,—“the *kesarvrkṣa* looks as though adorned by a beautiful creeper, by your nearness,” *Śakuntalā* answers, “that is why you are named *Priyamvadā*² (one who speaks pleasing words); thus perhaps showing her knowledge of *Śabdaśāstra*³. Another example of the same is found in the fact that *Śakuntalā* named the creeper full of white flowers as *Vanajyotsnā*—the moonlight of the forest. By their own statements on various occasions, it is clear that they were well-versed in the different branches of literature as well as arts.⁴ Though they had neither the practical experience of the worldly life, nor any direct contact with the people of the city, still they

1. शकुन्तला—सखि अनसूये ! अतिपितद्वेन वल्कलेन प्रियंवदया नियन्त्रिता-
ऽस्मि । शिथिलय तावदेतत् ।

प्रियंवदा—(सहासम्)—अत्र पयोधरविस्तारयितुकमात्मनो यौवनमुपा-
लम्भस्व । मां किमुपालभसे । Ab. Ś. I. p. 9

2. प्रियंवदा—हला शकुन्तले ! अत्रैव तावन्मुहूर्तं तिष्ठ । यावत्त्वयोपगतया
लतासनाथ इवायं केसरवृक्षकः प्रतिभाति ।

शकुन्तला—अतः खलु प्रियंवदाऽसि त्वम् । Ab. Ś. I. p. 10

3. प्रियंवशे वदः खच् । (3-2-38) प्रियंवदः । वशंवदः । गमे सुपि वाच्यः ।

S. Kau. 64-2953-p. 494

अरुद्विषदजन्तस्य मुमु । ६. ३. ६७. अरुणो द्विजतोऽजन्तस्य च मुमागमः
स्यात् खिदन्ते उत्तरपदे न त्वव्ययस्य । शित्वाच्छबादि ।

S. Kau. 64-2942-p. 494

4. अनसूया—हला शकुन्तले ! अनम्यन्तरे खल्वावां मदनगतस्य वृत्तान्तस्य किन्तु
यादृशी इतिहासनिबन्धेषु कामयमानानामवस्था श्रूयते तादृशी ते पश्यामि ।

Ab. Ś. III. p. 32

सख्यौ—अये अनुपयुक्तभूषणोऽयं जनः । चित्रकर्मपरिचयेनाङ्गेषु आभरण-
विनियोगं कुर्वः । Ab. Ś. IV. p. 48

have heard a lot about the manners and customs existent among people leading a worldly life. For example, Anasūyā had heard that kings are polygamous, and so is anxious for the welfare of her friend after she would be married to Duṣyanta.¹ The girls know about the various ceremonies to be performed by married women as is indicated by the statement of Anasūyā that Śakuntalā had to worship the diety of *Saubhāgya*.² The things to be used for auspiciousness are also not unknown to them, as is proved from the fact that Anasūyā had kept the *Kesaramalikā* in the coconut-shell for the occasion of sending their friend to her husband's home³. The sage Kaṇva claims himself to be well-versed in the ways of the world, though a constant resident of the forest⁴. These girls were brought up under the careful and loving eyes of this skillful father who seems to take the places of both parents for them. The training imparted to them by the sage is so perfect that he could safely leave them in charge of the hermitage, whenever he had to go on pilgrimage or other important journeys. The efficiency with which Anasūyā and Priyamvadā perform the duties and rites of daily life is indeed commendable. Their courtesy and manners to the guests show their culture and good taste. Though these characteristics are very much marked in these girls, those in the other dramas

1. अनसूया—वयस्य ! बहुवल्लभा राजानः श्रूयन्ते । यथा नौ प्रियसखी बन्धु-
जनशोचनीया न भवति तथा निर्वर्तय । Ab. Ś. III. p. 37

2. अनसूया—ननु सख्याः शकुन्तलायाः सौभाग्यदेवताऽर्चनीया ।
Ab. Ś. IV. p. 42

3. अनसूया—तेन ह्येतस्मिँश्चूतशाखावलम्बिते नारिकेलसमुद्रके एतन्निमित्तमेव
कालान्तरक्षमा निक्षिप्ता मया केसरमालिका । तदिमां हस्तसंनिहितां
कुरु । यावदहमपि तस्यै मृगरोचनां तीर्थमृत्तिकां दूर्वाकिसलयानीति मङ्गल-
समालम्भनानि विरचयामि । Ab. Ś. IV. p. 40

4. कण्व—वनोकसौऽपि सन्तो लौकिकज्ञा वयम् । Ab. Ś. IV p. 53

also show more or less the same qualities according to their environments.

The maidens portrayed by Kālidāsa, seem to be quite grown up and in their youth. This obviously goes to prove that child-marriage was not the custom of the day. It may be argued that the girls of royal and aristocratic families were not subjected to this custom till very late days. But Śakuntalā and her friends do not represent the maidens of royal families at all; and Kaṇva seems to follow the customs of the people in general. So, there cannot be anything wrong in concluding that marriage was thought of only after the girls attained a mature age, when they are able to know and understand the significance of that incident in their lives. At the same time, there are indications of girls being not allowed to move about freely after they reached the marriageable age. When leaving for Hastināpura, Śakuntalā desires that her friends also accompany her if possible but Kaṇva tells her that it would not be proper for them to do so, because they are also to be given away in marriage.¹

The repeated statements of Kaṇva point towards a society which considers marriage a necessity for the girl. The unmarried girl meant a great burden to the parents. While Śakuntalā was taking leave of her foster-sister, Vana-ijyotsnā, the sage says, "Even as I desired, you, by your own meritorious deeds, have obtained a suitable husband. This creeper also has united with the mango tree. Now I am free of all anxiety concerning both of you."² Again, we hear him heave a sigh of relief, when Śakuntalā is sent

1. कण्वः—वत्से ! इमे अपि प्रदेये । न युक्तमनयोस्तत्र गन्तुम् । त्वया सह गौतमी यास्यति ।
Ab. Ś. IV. p. 53

2. कण्वः—संकल्पितं प्रथममेव मया तवार्थं भर्तारमात्मसदृशं सुकृतैर्गता त्वम् ।
चूतेन संश्रितवती नवमालिकेय-
मस्यामहं त्वमयि च सम्प्रति वीतचिन्तः ॥

Ab. Ś. IV. 18

off to her husband, even though he is very sad due to the separation of that beloved daughter, as testified by himself twice.¹ His words at the end of the fourth act are an eye-opener to the ideas of the society portrayed by the poet. It is plainly said that, by sending the daughter to her husband's house, the father has got relief; for, "the maiden is indeed the property of others; and having sent her now to her husband, I feel relieved like the man who has returned to the owner the trust left with him."² Here we have an echo of the ruling of Manu who says, "The father who does not give away the girl in marriage at the proper time, the husband who does not enjoy her at the proper time, and the son who does not protect the widowed mother are all to be despised."³

The possibility of girls taking up the vow of life-long celibacy also seems to be existent, for, in the very beginning itself Duṣyanta asks Anasūyā what the intentions of their father are about Śakuntalā—whether she is to lead a life of

1. अ. कण्वः—यास्यत्यद्य शकुन्तलेति हृदयं संस्पृष्टमुत्कण्ठया
कण्ठः स्तम्भितबाष्पवृत्तिकलुषश्चिन्ताजडं दर्शनम् ।
वैक्लव्यं मम तावदीदृशमिदं स्नेहादरण्यौकसः
पीड्यन्ते गृहिणः कथं नु तनयाविरलेषदुःखैर्नवैः ॥

Ab. Ś. IV. 6.

- आ. कण्वः—शममेष्यति मम शोकः कथं नु वत्से त्वया रचितपूर्वम् ।
उटजद्वारविरूढं नीवारबलिं विलोकयतः ॥

Ab. Ś. IV. 21

2. कण्वः—शकुन्तलाम् पतिकुलं विस्मज्य लब्धमिदानीं स्वास्थ्यम् । कुतः ।
अर्थो हि कन्या परकीय एव तामद्य संप्रेष्य पारिग्रहीतुः ।
जातो ममायं विशदः प्रकामं प्रत्यर्पितन्यास इवान्तरात्मा ॥

Ab. Ś. IV. 22

3. कालेऽदाता पिता वाच्यो वाच्यश्चानुपयन्यतिः ।
मृते भर्तरि पुत्रस्तु वाच्यो मातुररक्षिता ॥

Manu. IX. 4

celibacy or she is to be given in marriage.¹ Only after he is reassured by the plain words of the friends, does he allow his mind to take its free course. This reminds us of the custom existent in the times of the earlier literature and also referred to in the *Mahābhārata*. The word *amūjah*, meaning spinster, is found in the literature, up to 500 B. C., thus showing the existence of such women at that time. In the *Mahābhārata*, we hear of Sulabhā who decided to take up life-long celibacy, because she could not get a suitable husband.² But, this seems to have become a very rare custom, because Kālidāsa repeatedly refers to the anxiety of the parents to get their daughters married to suitable persons.³ The real duties of women began with their marriage.

In the third, fourth and fifth acts of the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, we have some glimpses of the marriage customs of the day. Of the eight types of marriages known to the *Mahābhārata*, and also ordained in the *Manusmṛti*⁴, the *Gāndharva*, *Brahma* and *Prājāpatya* types seem to be the best

1. राजा—वैखानसं किमनया व्रतमाप्रदाना-
द्व्यापाररोधि मदनस्य निषेवितव्यम् ।
अत्यन्तमेव मदिरेक्षणवल्लभाभि-
राहो निवत्स्यति समं हरिणाङ्गनाभिः ॥ Ab. Ś. I. 25.
2. साऽहं तस्य कुले जाता भर्तार्यसति मद्विधे ।
विनीता मोक्षधर्मेषु चराम्येका मुनिव्रतं ॥
Ma. Bh. XIII. 302. 186.
3. प्रियंवदा—गुरोः पुनरस्या अनुरूपवरप्रदाने संकल्पः ।
Ab. Ś. I. p. 15.
अनसूया—गुणवते कन्यका प्रतिपादनीयेत्ययं तावत्प्रथमः संकल्पः ।
तं यदि दैवमेव संपादयति नन्वप्रयासेन कृतार्थो गुरुजनः ॥
Ab. Ś. IV. p. 42.
4. ब्राह्मो दैवस्तथैवार्षः प्राजापत्यस्तथासुरः ।
गान्धर्वो राक्षसश्चैव पेशाचश्चाष्टमोऽधमः ॥
Manu. III. 21.

known to the society depicted by Kālidāsa. It is also clear that the *Gāndharva*, though prevalent, was not quite approved by society in general. The poet himself does not seem to be very much in favour of this, as could be realised from the various statements in the fifth act and also from the results shown throughout the play. The fully recognized marriage is the *Brāhma* type, as described in the *Kumārasambhava*, while the *Prājāpatya* in which the girl is given to the husband by the father for the sake of *Sahadharma-carana*, that is, partnership in life,¹ is the best. This is proved by the fear felt by the girls at every step, as to the reaction of their father when he comes to know of this. Śakuntalā was diffident to the very end. It is the assurance of Duśyanta that there were many royal maidens who were wedded by *Gāndharva* rite and were finally blessed by their parents,² along with the encouragement of her dear friends, that made her yield to her strong desire. The opinion of the poet that this was not the right thing to do is made clear by the words of Kaṇva himself, as repeated by Priyamvadā to Anasūya.³ The sage after embracing her said, "My dear child, though the eyes of the sacrificer were dimmed by the smoke, luckily the offering has fallen in the fire itself. So I need not be anxious about you, even as about the knowledge imparted to a good disciple." The reference to the eyes dimmed by smoke and the use of the word "luckily" show how Kaṇva felt about all this. That the man happened to be the right one

1. सहोभौ चरतां धर्ममिति वाचानुभाष्य च ।

कन्याप्रदानमभ्यर्च्य प्राजापत्यो विधिः स्मृतः ॥

Manu. III. 30

2. राजा—गान्धर्वेण विवाहेन बह्व्यो राजर्षिकन्यकाः ।

श्रूयन्ते परिणीतास्ताः पितृभिश्चाभिनन्दिताः ॥ Ab. Ś. III. 20

3. प्रियंवदा—ततो यावदेनां लज्जावनतमुखीं परिष्वज्य तातकण्वेनैवमभिनन्दितम्—दिष्ट्या धूमाकुलितहृष्टेरपि यजमानस्य पावक एवाहुतिः पतिता । वत्से ! सुशिष्यपरिदत्ता विद्येवाशोचनीया संवृता ।

Ab. Ś. IV. p. 46

was due to sheer luck. The girls ought not to have been so hasty to allow the course of free love in the way they did. It is these ideas that are emphasized later on in the fifth act through Śārṅgarava, who flares up in anger and tells his foster-sister : "This is how one's own thoughtless, unchecked, deed burns."¹ He adds, as though to the world in general, "Hence, every union should be sealed after due consideration, much more so when it is done in secret. Otherwise, intimacy with unknown hearts will end thus in hostility."² Not only here but throughout the fifth act, Śārṅgarava and also Śāradvata seem to be echoing the feelings of the society in general. The similarity and contrast between the two disciples are only too obvious. Both are simple and straight-forward ascetic youths and both are equally devoted and obedient to their preceptor. But, while Śāradvata is just satisfied with carrying the message of Kaṇva to the king, Śārṅgarava could not be so calm and cool at all the injustice he visualised. A close study of the fifth act will help us to see clearly the general condition of women in society and also what Kālidāsa felt about the same.

The daughter, now being married, was to take her place by the side of her husband. So, the father sent her with the necessary escort to the city. The farewell ceremony was performed and the girl was blessed by the elderly married women before her departure from her paternal home. The blessings given to Śakuntalā at this time are very significant. "My daughter, may you obtain the title of Mahādevī, as a token of your husband's love and respect for you."³ "May you be the mother of heroic sons."⁴ "May

1. शार्ङ्गरवः—इत्यमात्मकृतं प्रतिहतं चापलं दहति । Ab. Ś. V. p. 65

2. अतः परीक्ष्य कर्तव्यं विशेषात्संगतं रहः ।

अज्ञातहृदयेष्वेवं वैरीभवति सौहृदम् ॥ Ab. Ś. V. 24

3. तापसीनामन्यतमा—जाते, भर्तुर्बहुमानसूचकं महादेवीशब्दं लभस्व ।

Ab. Ś. IV. p. 47

4. द्वितीया—वत्से, वीरप्रसविनी भव ।

Ab. Ś. IV. p. 47

you be always respected by your husband"¹ These are the highest things desirable for a married woman. She does not seem to have any existence as an individual by herself. To be honoured by her husband and bear heroic sons to him are the highest honours that a woman could hope for. The blessings of Kaṇva also are noteworthy. Though he has accepted the inevitable and wishes her all the best a woman can hope for, there seem to be certain doubts lurking in his mind as to the reception she will meet with at the court. It were those fears and hopes that are signified in his words when he says, "May you be honoured by your husband, as Śarmiṣṭhā was by Yayāti, and may you get as imperial a son as Puru himself!"² The meaning is much deeper than what obviously the words convey. Śarmiṣṭhā, the *asura* princess, also was married to king Yayāti according to the *Gāndharva* rites secretly. She had to undergo many difficulties and suffer much humiliation before she could finally obtain her rightful position as the queen. Even that happened only after Puru, her son, proved his worth beyond any doubt. Kaṇva blesses that Śakuntalā also may give birth to a son as great as Puru and thus raise her to her rightful place. Of course, the difference is there between the circumstances of the two cases. While Yayāti could not accept Śarmiṣṭhā because of his fears about his first wife and her father, the great sage Śukrāchārya, Duṣyanta had obviously no such reasons to reject his duly wedded wife. Kaṇva, who was worldly-wise, doubted the reception his daughter may get, because he was aware of the aversion of the society to love-marriages. His advice to Śakuntalā as to her duties as a wife³

1. तृतीया—वत्से ! भर्तुर्बहुमता भव ।

Ab. Ś. IV. p. 47

2. कण्वः—वत्से !

ययातेरिव शर्मिष्ठा भर्तुर्बहुमता भव ।

पुत्रं त्वमपि सम्राजं सेव पूरुषवाप्नुहि ॥

Ab. Ś. IV. 7

3. कण्वः—सा त्वमितः पतिकुलं प्राप्य-

is also to be understood in this light. It is not enough that she should serve her elders, treat her co-wives as dearest friends, be good to servants and be humble, even though she is raised to a very high position. She is specially told that she should not in any way go against her husband, even if he ill-treats her. Could it not be a warning to Śakuntalā, who has erred in her duties knowingly or unknowingly? It is the same trend of the ideas that predominate the message Śarṅgarava delivers to Duṣyanta at the court. Presenting Śakuntalā before the king, Śarṅgarava gives the message thus: "Since, by mutual consent, you have married my daughter, now I allow it to be so, because of my love for both of you. You are the best among deserving men, and Śakuntalā is the very personification of all good actions; and the Creator having united you both, has done some thing beyond any criticism. So now, with my blessings, accept her who is about to be the mother of your child for eternal companionship.¹ These words seem to repeat the ideas of the formulas of both the *Gāndharva* and *Prājāpatya* types of marriages as described in the *Manusmṛiti*. While the first is described as the rite by which the bride and the groom unite with each other by mutual consent in secret²

शुश्रूषस्व गुरुन्कुरु प्रियसखीवृत्तिं सपत्नीजने

पत्युर्विप्रकृताऽपि रोषणतया मा स्म प्रतीपं गमः ।

भूयिष्ठं भव दक्षिणा परिजने भाग्येष्वनुत्सेकिनी

यान्त्येवं गृहिणीपदं युवतयो वामाः कुलस्याधयः ॥ Ab. Ś. IV. 18

1. शाङ्गैरवः—यन्मिथः समयादिमां मदीयां दुहितरं भवानुपायंस्त तन्मया

प्रीतिमता युवयोरनुज्ञातम् । कुतः ।

त्वमर्हतां प्राग्रसरः स्मृतोऽसि नः शकुन्तला मूर्तिमती च सत्क्रिया ।

समानयंस्तुल्यगुणं वधूवरं चिरस्य वाच्यं न गतः प्रजापतिः ॥

तदिदानीमापन्नसत्त्वेयं प्रतिगृह्यतां सहधर्मचरणायेति । Ab. Ś. V. p. 61

2. इच्छयान्योन्यसंयोगः कन्यायाश्च वरस्य च ।

गान्धर्वः स तु विज्ञेयो मैथुन्यः कामसंभवः ॥

Manu. III. 32

to satisfy their lust, the other is defined as the bestowing of the girl by her parents on the suitable man with the words "for eternal companionship."¹ It seems that the father was not quite happy about the marriage performed by mutual consent alone. But, being a loving father and a man of understanding, he accepted the situation and fulfilled the rites of the marriage in the way acceptable to society by sending Śakuntalā to him in the bridal garb and with the usual words, *Sahadharmāchārīṇīyā*. Under ordinary circumstances, all should have ended well here. But, the king was silent and the bridal party naturally got uneasy. Gautamī, the old foster-mother also felt the urge to say something. Being an old woman, she was more conventional and was feeling more uncomfortable. Her words plainly prove that she did not at all approve of the whole affair. She is very remorseful when she says: "Neither did you wait for permission from your elders nor did you consult us before entering into this union. In a matter like this in which you only cared for each other, what can a third person say to either?"² All these show that though love-marriage existed as legally binding, the society did not look favourably on such unions. But once married, the girl had to remain with her husband, whether he liked her or not. That is why Kaṇva hastened to send her to Hastināpura, and Śārṅgarava says it in so many plain words. Even if the husband does not like her, the girl's relations would like her to be with him.³

1. सहोभौ चरतां धर्ममिति वाचानुभाष्य च ।

कन्याप्रदानमम्यर्च्यं प्राजापत्यो विधिः स्मृतः ॥ Manu. III. 30

2. गौतमी—आर्य ! किमपि वक्तुकामाऽस्मि । न मे वचनावसरोऽस्ति ।
कथमिति !

नापेक्षितो गुरुजनोऽनया न खलु पृष्टश्च बन्धुजनः ।

एकैकमेव चरिते भणामि किमेकमेकस्य ॥ Ab. Ś. V. 16

3. शाङ्गरवः—कथमिदं नाम ? भवन्त एव सुतरां लोकवृत्तान्तनिष्णाताः ।

Inspite of all that was said and done, the king had no remembrance of having married Śakuntalā, and so would not accept her. The society seems to give an upper hand to the man. However, beloved the daughter may be, she had no claim on her parents after she was married. Śāradvata very calmly pronounces the verdict: "Here is your wife. Accept her or reject her, as you like; for the husband has all-round authority over his wife."¹ This seems to be an echo of the injunction found in the Manusmṛti that however bad or cruel or despicable the husband may be, he should be worshipped by the wife as the divinity.² In the above words of Śāradvata, we have the law of society in its naked form. This is once more emphasized by the angry Śārṅgarava, when Śakuntalā in her desperate condition starts after them. Gautamī, with her motherly affection, pleads with him saying: "What can my poor girl do when her husband is cruelly rejecting her?"³ But no. The brother, loving though he may be, cannot allow her to go on committing mistake after mistake. She had already brought enough disgrace on herself as well as on the family. He trembles with rage and shouts at Śakuntalā: "What! you, wayward one! do you still dare to take liberties? If what the king says is correct, then of what use are you, who have brought dis-

सतीमपि ज्ञातिकुलैकसंश्रयां
जनोजन्यथा भर्तृमतीं विशङ्कते ।
अतः समीपे परिणेतुरिष्यते

प्रियाप्रिया वा प्रमदा स्वबन्धुभिः ॥ Ab. Ś. V. 17

1. शारद्वतः—तदेषा भवतः कान्ता त्यज वैनं गृहाण वा ।

उपपन्ना हि दारेषु प्रभुता सर्वतोमुखी ॥ Ab. Ś. V. 26

2. विशीलः कामवृत्तो वा गुणैर्वा परिवर्जितः ।

उपचर्यः स्त्रिया साध्व्या सततं देववत्पतिः ॥ Manu. V. 154

3. गौतमी—प्रत्यादेशपरुषे भर्तरि किं वा मे पुत्रिका करोतु ।

Ab. Ś. V. p. 66

grace to the family, and to the father ? On the other hand, if you are sure of your pure character, it is better for you to live even as a maid-servant in your husband's house."¹ This need not necessarily mean that Śakuntalā may have to stay as a slave in the king's house. In fact the vehemence of the statement only reflects the strong opinion of the society that the place of the wife is always near her husband in whatever capacity and position she may find herself—because a married woman who stays away from her husband is open to all kinds of criticism as has already been stated by Śaṅgarava himself.² The rule of Manu, that neither by selling nor by rejecting does the wife get separated from the husband³ seems to hold good.

In Śaṅgarava we see the honest, straight-forward and loving brother, who finds himself in a terrible position. He had to stand by and see his sister insulted and disgraced. He is angry with the man who brought her to this position. He is enraged at his foster-sister, who by her innocent and trusting nature, has made a fool of herself by falling into the clutches of such a man. Over and above all this he is angry with the society which calmly allows such a stark injustice to the woman and allows the man his upper hand everywhere.

1. शाङ्गरवः—(सरोषं निवृत्य)—किं पुरोभागे ! स्वातन्त्र्यमवलम्बसे ।

यदि यथा वदति क्षितिपस्तथा

त्वमसि किं पितुस्तुलया त्वया ।

अथ तु वेत्सि शुचिन्नतमात्मनः

पतिकुले तव दास्यमपि क्षमम् ॥

Ab. Ś. V. 27

2. शाङ्गरवः—सतीमपि ज्ञातिकुलैकसंश्रयां

जनोज्ज्वला भर्तृमतीं विशङ्कते ।

अतः समीपे परिणेतुरिष्यते

प्रियाप्रिया वा प्रमदा स्वबन्धुभिः ॥

Ab. Ś. V. 17

3. न निष्क्रयनिसर्गाम्यां भर्तृभार्या विमुच्यते ।

Manu. IX. 46

There is another side of the picture—woman as seen in the society. In Manusmṛti, women are denounced as the personification of bad qualities,¹ selfish and clever to get what they want. It is the same attitude that is perceived in the Kings towards women in general.² He repeatedly asks how can the sages blame him on the basis of a woman's words.³ When Śakuntalā is in a fix due to the loss of the ring, which she realized suddenly at the court, Gautamī in her simple and natural way tells her what the possibility is. The king comes out atonce with the sneering remark: "this is what is called the ready resourcefulness of women."⁴ He says without any hesitation that women are deceptive by nature.⁵ All this shows what the general trend of thought in the society was, the examples of which are many in the Hitopadeśa also.⁶

The period between 500 B. C. to 500 A. D. was a landmark in the history of Indian women as a whole. The high and noble ideals that held sway over the Aryans in the early Vedic period had given way to practical worldly wis-

1. शय्यासनमलंकारं कामं क्रोधमनार्जवम् ।

द्रोहभावं कुचर्यां च स्त्रीभ्यो मनुरकल्पयत् ॥ Manu. IX. 17

2. राजा—एवमादिभिरात्मकार्यनिर्वर्तिनीनामनृतमयवाङ्मधुभिराकृष्यन्ते
विषयिणः । Ab. Ś. V. p. 64

3. राजा—अयि भोः ! किमत्रभवतीप्रत्ययादेवास्मान्संवृतदोषाक्षरेणक्षिणुथ ?
Ab. Ś. V. p. 65

4. राजा—(सस्मितम्) = इदं तत्प्रत्युत्पन्नमति स्त्रैणमिति यदुच्यते ।
Ab. Ś. V. p. 63

5. राजा—स्त्रीणामशिक्षितपटुत्वममानुषीषु
संहस्यते किमुत याः प्रतिबोधवत्यः । Ab. Ś. V. 22

6. अ. उशना वेद यच्छास्त्रं यच्च वेद बृहस्पतिः ।
स्वभावेनैव तच्छास्त्रं स्त्रीबुद्धौ सुप्रतिष्ठतम् ॥ Hit. V. 123

आ. आहारी द्विगणस्त्रीणाम् बुद्धिस्तासां चतुर्गुणा ।
षड्गुणो व्यवसायश्च कामश्चाष्टगुणः स्मृतः ॥ Hit. VI. 117

dom predominated by self-centered ambitions. The desire of the intellectual class for supremacy in all fields of life, mingled with the desire of man for power over woman, created an atmosphere of confusion full of drastic actions, reactions and counteractions. The literature that came into vogue at this period contains opposite views concerning women. This is a common trait found in the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and also the Manusmṛti. Of course, examples are not few that show the laudable position women enjoyed in their homes at the time. But apart from the individual cases, the general attitude of the society appears to be hostile to women. There are many disparaging statements about women in both the Rāmāyaṇa as well as the Mahābhārata. In the Rāmāyaṇa, what Kauśalyā had to say about women in general is note-worthy.¹ On one occasion Lakṣmaṇa observes that women are cruel by nature and also malicious². In another place, Agastya says, women combine in themselves the fickleness of the lightening, the sharpness of the sword and the swiftness of Garuḍa and wind.³

1. असत्यः सर्वलोकेऽस्मिन्सततं सत्कृताः प्रियैः ।
 भर्तारं नानुमन्यन्ते विनिपातगतं स्त्रियः ॥
 एष स्वभावो नारीणामनुभूय पुरा सुखम् ।
 अल्पामप्यापदं प्राप्य दुष्यन्ति प्रजहत्यपि ॥
 असत्यशीला विकृता दुर्ग्राह्यहृदयाः सदा ।
 युवत्यः पापसङ्कल्पाः क्षणमात्राद्विरागिणः ॥
 न कुलं न कृतं विद्यां न दत्तं नापि संग्रहम् ।
 स्त्रीणां ब्रह्माति हृदयमनित्यहृदयाः हि ताः ॥
 साध्वीनां हि स्थितानां तु शीले सत्ये श्रुते शमे ।
 स्त्रीणां पवित्रं परमं पतिरेको विशिष्यते ॥ V. R. II. 39. 20-24
2. वाक्यमप्रतिरूपं तु न चित्रं स्त्रीषु मैथिलि ।
 स्वभावस्त्वेष नारीणां एवं लोकेषु दृश्यते ॥
 विमुक्तधर्माश्चपलास्तीक्ष्णा भेदकराः स्त्रियः । V. R. III. 45. 29-30
3. एषा हि प्रकृतिः स्त्रीणामासृष्टे रघुनन्दन ।
 समस्थमनुरज्यन्ति विषमस्थं त्यजन्ति च ॥

The Mahābhārata also abounds in deprecating statements. Bhīṣma informs Yudhiṣṭhira, in the course of his advice to the latter, that women do not have any discretion as to the man with whom they co-habit.¹ A man with thousand tongues and living for hundred years will not be able to finish describing the evils of women, even if he does it day in and day out without ceasing.² What would become of a family left to the influence of a woman without virtue, an influence hidden and increasing, and the more dangerous, because those on whom it is exercised are not aware of it. The mutual attraction of man and woman is unconquerable. So the law-givers and ancient seers decided to safeguard the purity and sanctity of the nation by controlling the tempting elements themselves. They set out to make the laws of matrimony more and more rigid. A series of laws were enacted from time to time, as necessity arose, sometimes to save women from troubles and at other times to enforce fidelity, when that was unwillingly given. Most of these laws finally became codified under the name of Manu, and his Smṛti became the final word for conduct to keep the Aryan society firm in its path of duty. Perhaps, it was as a matter of necessity and as a criterion of good conduct, chivalry and gallant nature, that Manu ordained—"The woman should be protected in her childhood by her father, in her youth by her husband, and in her old age by her

शतहृदानां लोलत्वं शस्त्राणां तीक्ष्णतां तथा ।

गरुडानिलयोः शैव्यमनुगच्छन्ति योषितः ॥ V. R. III. 13. 5-6

1. अ. नासां कश्चिद्भ्रम्योऽस्ति नासां वयसि संस्थितिः ।

विरूपं रूपवन्तं वा पुमानित्येव भुञ्जते ॥

M. Bh. XV. 37. 17

आ. नेता रूपं परीक्षन्ते नासां वयसि संस्थितिः ।

सुरूपं वा विरूपं वा पुमानित्येव भुञ्जते ॥ Manu. IX. 14

2. यदि जिह्वासहस्रं स्याज्जीवेच्च शरदां शतम् ।

अनन्यकर्मा स्त्रीदोषान् अनुक्त्वा निघनं व्रजेत् ॥ M. Bh. XV. 38.8

son.”¹ There are many passages in the Manusmṛti which support this view. Again and again it is enjoined that women were to be treated with love and affection.² One is inclined to think that Manu’s aim was not so much to deny all freedom to women, as to ensure adequate and incessant protection to them.

Buddhism and Jainism which were powerful during this period were both propagating asceticism and renunciation. The Epics and Purāṇas of the Brahminical society also asserted that the best way to salvation was to avoid woman, and all sorts of arguments were brought forward and incidents described to prove their own points. Such sentiments did not go unchallenged. Nor did the society in general accept this attitude completely. For example, Varāhamihira in his *Br̥hatsamhitā* criticises such remarks about women in a very searching way. “Let us seek the truth”, he says, “what is that wrong committed by woman alone which is not done by man? The Śāstras have ordained that faithlessness of man or woman to each other is equally sinful. The man does not care to observe this rule, while the woman is firm in the observance of her duties. The man is not satisfied even after enjoying the sensual pleasures for hundred

1. पिता रक्षति कौमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।

रक्षन्ति स्थविरे पुत्राः न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति ॥

Manu. IX. 3

2. अ. परपत्नी तु या स्त्री स्यादसम्बन्धा च योनितः ।

तां ब्रूयाद्भवतीत्येवं सुभगे भगिनीति च ॥

भ्रातृभार्योपसंग्राह्या सवर्णाहन्यहन्यपि ।

विप्रोष्य तूपसंग्राह्या ज्ञातिसम्बन्धियोषितः ॥

Manu. II. 129-132

आ. पितृभिर्भ्रातृभिश्चैताः पतिभिर्देवैस्तथा ।

पूज्या भूषयितव्याश्च बहुकल्याणमीप्सुभिः ॥

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ।

यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः ॥

Manu. III. 55-56

years. But the woman leaves them by her sheer will-power. The man goes on talking to his wife about the intense love he has for her as long as she is alive but hurries to contract a second marriage as soon as she dies, even before her ashes are cooled down. Woman, on the other hand, follows him even to the funeral pyre, because of her love for him. Fie unto the man who makes disparaging statements about the noble woman! It is just like the audacity of the thief who, having stolen all that could be taken, challenges loudly the innocent man."¹ If these are the facts then how is it that the opposing opinions get firmly rooted in the society? Varāhamihira is ready with his answer : "Those who denounced women, did so, not because they themselves believed what they said, but because they were anxious to dissuade man from marriage and family-life. The ascetic school was out to decry women with this end in view. They are men with no good intentions, I believe."²

This period emphasized that, of the four aims of life, namely, Duty (*Dharma*), Wealth (*Artha*), Worldly pleasures (*Kāma*) and Salvation (*Mokṣa*), the first alone is to be

1. प्रब्रूत सत्यं कतमोज्जनानां दोषोऽस्ति यो नाचरितो मनुष्यैः ॥
 दम्पत्योर्व्युत्क्रमे दोषः समः शास्त्रे प्रतिष्ठितः ।
 न ते न समवेक्षन्ते तेनात्र वरमज्जना ॥
 न शतेनाऽपि वर्षेण अप्रति मदनाशयः ।
 तत्राशक्त्या निवर्तन्ते नराः धैर्येण योषितः ॥
 पुरुषश्चटुलानि कामिनीनां कुरुते यानिपरं न तानि पश्चात् ।
 सुकृताज्ञतयाज्जना गतासूनवगुह्य प्रविशन्ति सप्तजिह्वं ॥
 अहो धाष्ट्र्यमसाधूनां निन्दतामनघाः स्त्रियः ।
 मुष्णतामिव चोराणां तिष्ठ चोरेति जल्पताम् ॥

Br. Sam. LXXVI. 11-17

2. योप्यज्जनानां प्रवदन्ति दोषान् वैराग्यमार्गेणगुणान् विहाय ।
 ते दुर्जना मे मनसो वितर्को सद्भाववाक्यानि न तानि तेषां ॥

Br. Sam. LXXIV. 5

adhered to in order to reach the final goal, that is, *Mokṣa*. The *Mahābhārata*, which seems to depict more or less a true picture of the contemporary society repeatedly emphasizes this point in its didactic passages.¹ The author of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* emphasizes both sides of the question and states a balanced view. Rāma anxious to renounce the worldly pleasures said, "He who has got a wife gets himself entangled in the desire for enjoyment. How can there be desire if there is no wife? By renouncing the wife one renounces the world and by renouncing the world one becomes happy. The woman is the mine of all imperfections. I leave woman and thus renounce the world and will become happy."² Vasiṣṭha answered this extreme statement of Rāma in very convincing words and proved to the prince that his attitude was wrong. He praised women for the valuable assistance they give to their husbands in all spheres of life,³ and quoted the story of Cudālā who actually raised her husband to the eternal height of *Jīvanamukti*, by precept

1. धर्मेणैवर्षयस्तीर्णाः धर्मे लोकाः प्रतिष्ठिताः ।
 अ. धर्मेण देवा दिवि च धर्मे चार्थस्समाहितः ॥ M. Bh. XIII. 146. 7
 आ. तस्माद्धर्मे प्रवर्तथास्समवस्थो युधिष्ठिर ।
 धर्मे स्थितानां कौन्तेय सिद्धिर्भवति शाश्वती ॥ M. Bh. XIII. 258. 24
 इ. तस्मान्नावगतैरर्थे धर्मं सेवेत पण्डितः ।
 धर्मं एको मनुष्याणां सहायः पारलौकिकः ॥ M. Bh. XV. 100. 16
2. सर्वेषां दोषरत्नानां सुसामुद्रिकया तथा ।
 दुःखशृङ्खलया नित्यमलमस्तु मम स्त्रिया ॥
 यस्य स्त्री तस्य भोगेच्छा निस्त्रीकस्य क्व भोगभूः ।
 स्त्रियं त्यक्त्वा जगत् त्यक्तं जगत्यक्त्वा सुखी भवेत् ।
 Yoga Va. XXI. 35
3. मोहादनादिगहनादनन्तगहनादपि ।
 पतितं व्यवसायिन्यस्तारयन्ति कुलस्त्रियः ॥
 शास्त्रार्थगुरुमंत्रादि तथा नोत्तारणक्षमम् ।
 यथैताः स्नेहशालिन्यो भर्तृणां कुलयोषितः ॥

as well as example. But human nature being what it is, such writers were not allowed to find favour with the general public. The bards of the ascetic school indulged in hyperbolic language to describe the faults and short-comings of women who were really the centre of the house-holder's life. The changing conditions of society, due to repeated wars and the changing religious ideas, thus provided for the deterioration of the position of women to a great extent.

The Manusmṛti which gives minute details as to the conduct of man from birth to death, breathes a spirit of contempt for women in general with a few exceptions here and there. Their rights are identified with those of the Śūdras, slaves and children. Though in one place it is ordained that the daughter is to be considered equal to the son,¹ in another place the rule is given that, "the girl may be initiated without any *mantras*; for marriage is the initiation for woman, serving the husband her education and the household duties her sacrifices,"² As far as the character of women is concerned Manu goes to the extent of saying, "One should not stay alone even with one's own mother or sister or daughter, because the attractions of the senses are

सखा भ्राता सुहृद्भृत्यो गुरुमित्रं धनं सुखं ।

शास्त्रमायतनं दासः सर्वे भर्तुः कुलाङ्गनाः ॥

सर्वथा सर्वयत्नेन पूजनीयाः कुलाङ्गनाः ।

लोकद्वयसुखं यासु सम्यक् सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

निरिच्छायाः प्रयातायाः पारं संसारवारिधेः ।

कथमस्योपकारस्य करिष्येते प्रतिक्रिया ॥ Yoga Vā. 109. 25-29

1. यथैवात्मा तथा पुत्रः पुत्रेण दुहिता समा ।

M. Bh. X. 4. 11

2. अमन्त्रिका तु कार्येयं स्त्रीणामावृदशेषतः ।

संस्कारार्थं शरीरस्य यथाकालं यथाक्रमम् ॥

वैवाहिको विधिः स्त्रीणां संस्कारो वैदिकः स्मृतः ।

पतिसेवा गुरोर्वासो गृहार्थोऽग्निपरिक्रिया ॥

Manu. II. 66-67

so strong that even wise people are unable to resist them."¹ While minute details of man's duties to gods are given, the only duty ordained for woman is to serve her husband. It is said, "There is no separate sacrifice nor fast nor pious practice for woman. She is honoured in heaven by her service and loyalty to her husband."²

There are many self-contradictory statements in the Manusmṛiti itself. In one place it is said that the woman and her husband are really one and the same.³ In the same chapter, in another context, it is said that women do not deserve freedom at any stage.⁴ In one place it is said that perpetual celibacy is better for a girl than a badly assorted union.⁵ In another context it is said that the girl should be given in marriage even before she attains the proper age, if a suitable man becomes available.⁶ Apart from these self-contradictory statements of Manu, there are other law-givers also who contradict the dictums of the former. While Manu ordains that, "wife, children, younger brothers and servants, if found guilty, should be beaten on the buttocks or on the back, but never on the head,"⁷ Nārada says, "do

1. मात्रा स्वस्त्रा दुहित्रा वा न विविक्तानो भवेत् ।
बलवानिन्द्रियग्रामो विद्वांसमपि कर्षति ॥ Manu. II. 215
2. नास्ति स्त्रीणां पृथग्यज्ञो न व्रतं नाप्युपोषणम् ।
पतिं शुश्रूषते येन तेन स्वर्गो महीयते ॥ Manu. V. 155
3. एतावानेव पुरुषो यज्जायात्मा प्रजेति ह ।
विप्राः प्राहुस्तथा चतस्रो भर्ता सा स्मृताङ्गना ॥ Manu. IX. 45
4. पिता रक्षति कौमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।
रक्षन्ति स्थविरे पुत्राः न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति ॥ Manu. IX. 3
5. काममामरणात्तिष्ठेद्दुष्टहे कन्यार्तमत्यपि ।
नचैवैनां प्रयच्छेत्तु गुणहीनाय कर्हिचित् ॥ Manu. IX. 89
6. उत्कृष्टायाभिरूपाय वराय सहशाय च ।
अप्राप्तामपि तां तस्मै कन्यां दद्याद्यथाविधि ॥ Manu. IX. 88
7. भार्या पुत्रञ्च दासश्च प्रेष्यो भ्राता च सोदरः ।
प्राप्तापराधास्ताब्धाः स्यू रज्ज्वा वैगुदलेन वा ॥

not strike your wife even with a flower, though she may be guilty of a hundred faults.”¹ According to Manu, the widow should not take even the name of another man,² but Nārada and Parāśara agree that a woman may re-marry in case her husband is dead, lost, gone away for a long time or is impotent or degraded.³ All told, a very close affinity is found between the Manusmṛti and the Rāmāyaṇa. The Mahābhārata, on the other hand, does not seem to have much in common with this code, but for the open denunciation found in certain places. The self-contradictory statements found in the Smṛti support the view that there existed two opposite trends of thought running side by side during these centuries. The position of women in this period is well expressed by Madame Bader in these words : “As an infant, when born, her birth was cursed; as a girl, by her grace and purity, she became the joy and blessing of the paternal heart. As woman, she was deprived of the right to perform the religious duties but she imposed some upon herself. As wife, she was made to submit to her husband. Yet she counselled him as a friend. As widow, she was placed in dependence upon her son ; yet, she governed him. Ardent in piety, a kind of spiritual and ascetic tenderness, complete abnegation of self, unlimited devotion to her family and a boundless need for love formed the character of the epic woman.”⁴ Thus, we see that the conception of women as the highest

पृष्ठतस्तु शरीरस्य नोत्तमाङ्गे कथंचन ।

अतोऽन्यथा तु प्रहर्न्प्राप्तः स्याच्चौरकिल्बिषम् ॥ Manu. VIII. 299-300

1. पुष्पेणापि न ताडयेत् । Nāradiya Manu Samhita.

2. न तु नामापि गृह्णीयात्पत्यौ प्रेते परस्यतु । Manu. V. 157

3. अ. पत्यौ प्रव्रजिते नष्टे क्लीबेऽथ पतिते मृते ।

पञ्चस्वापत्सु नारीणां पतिरन्यो विधीयते ॥ N. M. S. XII. 99

आ. नष्टे मृते प्रव्रजिते क्लीबे च पतिते पतौ ।

पञ्चस्वापत्सु नारीणां पतिरन्यो विधीयते ॥ P. Sm. IV. 30

4. Madama Bader : Women in Ancient India, p. 42

and noblest being, worthy of worship, was running side by side with the verdict that they are the worst specimens of humanity. These opposite trends were existent even before the advent of Jainism and Buddhism. Though the condition of society that called for reforms required equal treatment for man and woman, the society in general seemed to have favoured the attempts to curtail women's freedom. Women who submitted to these rules silently were eulogised, while those who questioned them were either denounced or ignored. This is what happened with the various characters in the Mahābhārata.

It was impossible for a seer and creator like Kālidāsa not to notice such injustice and to keep quiet after noticing the same. Hence he gave a glimpse of the society as it existed, but also showed quite clearly what he would like to see as the ideal. He made it clear that he did not like what was going on. What his ideals were is well-understood by a critical study of the three ideals of womanhood he has given to posterity—Śakuntalā, Umā and Sītā.

How Śakuntalā, the daughter of the Mother Nature, slowly developed into the mother of Sarvadāmana and the queen of Duṣyanta has been already discussed. In the Kumārasāmbhava, once more, we find the picture of a girl growing up to maturity and achieving her end by hard penances which finally brought about the welfare of the whole universe. A third portrait drawn before us is the highest ideal of Indian womanhood, Sītā, the mother of Kuśa and Lava, in the fourteenth canto of Raghuvamśa.

In the Kumārasāmbhava, we see Umā as a daughter, as a maiden deeply in love and also as an ascetic woman. The individuals, the circumstances and the atmosphere are all different from those of the dramas that we studied hitherto. The story is the union of the parents of the universe for the birth of the saviour of the world. The girl Pārvatī was born with the aim of reuniting with her lord of the previous

birth.¹ Lord Siva also was doing penance on the peak of the Himālayas ever since his wife, Dākṣāyaṇī left her body due to the disgrace she had to suffer from her father.² Pārvatī's beauty was unsurpassed and her father was sanctified and adorned by such a daughter.³ When the girl attained the marriageable age, the father naturally became anxious; but the prophetic words of Nārada, that she was to be the wife of Lord Śiva, whose body itself will be shared with her due to love,⁴ consoled him. Consequently the girl began to attend him daily in worship. In this case there is no question of love at first sight or *Kāma*. *Dharma* and final union with the Lord seem to be the end in view, which is the ideal visualised by Kālidāsa. By referring to the incidents in the previous birth of Pārvatī, Kālidāsa was hinting that the final aim was there from the beginning itself. But, for the progress of the world, *Artha* and *Kāma* also are needed. And it has to be shown to the world that great things can be achieved only by great sacrifices and still greater penances. Kāmadeva sent by Indra to achieve the union of the couple was not the one who could do any good to any one. The boasts of Kāmadeva and the very description of him⁵ clearly show the nature of attraction he can create in the minds of the people. This lustful love could not be instrumental to the final attainment of oneness, or of the birth of the divine son who could

1. अथावमानेन पितुः प्रयुक्ता दक्षस्य कन्या भवपूर्वपत्नी ।
सती सती योगविसृष्टदेहा तां जन्मने शैलवधूं प्रपेदे ॥ K. S. I. 21
2. यदैव पूर्वं जनने शरीरं सा दक्षरोषात्सुदती ससर्ज ।
तदा प्रभृत्येव विमुक्तसङ्गः पतिः पशूनामपरिग्रहोऽभूत् ॥ K. S. I. 53
3. प्रभा महत्या शिखयेव दीपस्त्रिमागंयेव त्रिदिवस्य मार्गः ।
संस्कारवत्येव गिरा मनीषी तथा स पूतश्च विभूषितश्च ॥ K. S. I. 28
4. तां नारदः कामचरः कदाचित्कन्यां किल प्रेक्ष्य पितुः समीपे ।
समादिदेशैकवधूं भवित्रीं प्रेम्णा शरीरार्धहरां हरस्य ॥ K. S. I. 50
5. K. S. III. 3-10 and 22-39

save the world. What such a *Kāma* can do is also described by Kālidāsa in the last canto of *Raghuvamśa* where he tells the story of Agnivarṇa. Such a *Kāma* let loose in the world was sure to destroy all *Dharma* and *Karma*. It was that illusionary love that was burnt in the fire of the third eye by the Lord of the Universe. The physical beauty was of no avail in this case because eternal union with the Lord was the end in view. Pārvatī realised the greatness of the thing that she desired. She was as firm as her father and she decided to obtain that beauty which was eternal by means of equally high and mighty penance.¹ She underwent the most difficult kinds of penance and forced Śiva to come to her. Still she had to undergo one more test. Maheśvara was testing himself and also her, who was to be his better half, by the very natural questions he put to her. Even an atom of self or the material consideration, if existent, would mar the divine union. Every possible objection was searched out and presented to Umā by the Vaṭu. The limit was reached. Calmly, but firmly she told the fellow to get out of her way. Thus the trust and confidence of identity proved beyond any doubt. The final union came. The Lord of the Universe Himself bowed down before His Śakti and told her that He was her slave bought by the unimaginable penances she did.² The union was all but complete. Here is another proof of Kālidāsa's sense of right or wrong. Umā and Maheśvara had become one by their mutual love and their penances. But they could not deviate from the right path. The message is given to Śiva by Gaurī through the friend that she would abide by the will of her father and so

1. इयेष सा कर्तुमबन्ध्वरूपतां समाधिमास्थाय तपोभिरात्मनः ।

अवाप्यते सा कथमन्यथा द्वयं तथाविधं प्रेम पतिश्च तादृशः ॥

K. S. V. 2

2. अद्यप्रभृत्यवनताङ्गि तवास्मि दासः क्रीतस्तपोभिः..... ।

K. S. V. 86

he should ask him for her hand.¹ Here is found the echo of *Manusmṛti*,² as well as *Rāmāyaṇa*.³ The Father of the Universe accepted this correct attitude and the seven sages accompanied by Arundhatī were sent to Himālaya for the purpose and finally they were married according to the usual marriage rites approved by the society.

In the case of *Śakuntalā*, the love tainted by material and lustful desire, was purged of all its evils by sorrow and suffering which raised both the couple to a plane of divine and eternal love. In the case of this second couple the final union was, once more, the result of long suffering. In both the cases, the necessity of keeping within the rules of social conventions is clearly emphasized. The poet seems to warn that if you live under the protection of the society, you will also have to accept the laws that govern the society. The greatest ideal that he holds up to posterity is *Sītā*, the patient and sad queen who kept up her dignity and self-respect, inspite of the odds arrayed against her in the form of social conditions.

In the *Raghuvamśa*, many women are portrayed by the poet, each having her own special traits of character and individuality. But none rises to the height of *Sītā*, whom we see in a new light in the fourteenth canto of the *Raghuvamśa*. As we have already pointed out, *Kālidāsa* is indebted to *Vālmiki* to a great extent. And there is actually no difference between the *Sītā* portrayed in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the one seen in the *Raghuvamśa*. All that happened till the death of *Rāvaṇa* was more or less natural, and the beha-

1. अथ विश्वात्मने गौरी संदिदेश मिथः सखीम् ।

दाता मे भूमृतां नाथः प्रमाणीक्रियतामिति ॥

2. यस्मै दद्यात्पिता त्वेनां भ्राता वानुमते पितुः ।

तं शुश्रूषेत जीवन्तं संस्थितं च न लङ्घयेत् ॥

3. इहलोके च पितृभिर्या स्त्री यस्य महामते ।

अद्भिर्दत्ता स्वधर्मेण प्रेत्यभावेऽपि तस्य सा ॥

K. S. VI. 1

Manu. V. 151

V. R. II. 29. 18

viour of Sītā throughout was as it should be. But it is the last phase of her life, her banishment by her husband for whom she had dedicated the whole life and her reaction to the same, that gives food for thought to any wise man. Here it may not be out of place to compare the Sītā of the Rāmāyaṇa with the Sītā of the Raghuvamśa in order to see the working of Kālidāsa's mind in this direction.

After reading the whole of the Rāmāyaṇa, we are left with two ideals : Sītā, the best of women and Rāma the truest of kings. It is Sītā who attracts more attention due to the unique experiences she had all through her life. In spite of the unimaginable trials and tribulations she had to undergo, Sītā is as firm as a rock in her fidelity and love for her husband. Rāma is everything to her; his fame and welfare are the only things she cares for; and her only duty seems to be to obey him in all circumstances. Though mutual fidelity between husband and wife was considered praise-worthy, it is the duty of woman towards the husband that is emphasized throughout. The greatness of the husband and the necessity of the wife's complete self-dedication to him has been eulogised at every possible place. Sītā kept up this ideal to the very end and suffered the utmost for the sake of her husband. But when the time for compensation came, the fact that counted most was the only incidence of her being a woman. Rāma's treatment of Sītā after the killing of Rāvaṇa is abominable. Like a cruel and callous man he said to Sītā in front of all assembled, "May it be known to you that this battle which has ended successfully with the help of my friends was not undertaken for your sake. It was only to redeem the name of myself and my family."¹

1. विदितश्चास्तु ते भद्रे योयं रणपरिश्रमः ।

स तीर्णः सुहृदां वीर्यान् त्वदर्थं मया कृतः ॥

रक्षता तु मया वृत्तमपवादं च सर्वशः ।

प्रख्यातस्यात्मवंशस्य न्यङ्गं च परिरक्षता ॥ V. R. VI. 118. 15-16

Adding insult to injury he continued, "I have rescued you from the enemy, and my name and fame has been enhanced. I have no more use for you. Go wherever you like."¹ Though cut to the quick, Sītā, like patience on a monument, kept her courage and balance of mind. Pathetically she spoke asking him why he was talking to her like that, even as an uncultured man to a woman of the same type.² She voiced there the complaint which echoes and re-echoes in the minds of women through the ages ever since. "Blindly swayed by anger, like a fickle-minded man, you have placed above all qualities the one fact that I am a woman."³ Still Rāma was unmoved and to clear her own good name, Sītā underwent the fire-ordeal of her own accord, thus proving her purity beyond any doubt. She was accepted back and they came back to Ayodhyā. Though the whole incident is elaborately described in the Rāmāyaṇa, Kālidāsa has summarily disposed it off with half a stanza only.⁴

The only conclusion we can arrive at is that the whole episode was undignified and unsuitable to the greatness of the ideal couple whom Kālidāsa had visualised in his mind. He did not believe in the one-sided dutifulness of the wife alone, as emphasised in the Rāmāyaṇa. At the same time, his admiration for the sage Vālmīki would not allow him to completely oppose his statements. Hence he just passed over these incidents which would show Rāma in a lower light.

1. तद्दृष्ट्वा ह्यभ्यनुज्ञाता यथेष्टं जनकात्मजे ।
एता दश दिशो भद्रे कार्यमस्ति न मे त्वया ॥
तदर्थं निर्जिता मे त्वं यशः प्रत्याहृतं मया ।
नास्ति मे त्वय्यभिष्वङ्गो यथेष्टं गम्यतामितः ॥ V. R. VI. 118. 18-21
2. किं मामसदृशं वाक्यमीदृशं श्रोत्रदारुणम् ।
रूक्षं श्रावयसे वीर प्राकृतः प्राकृतामिव ॥ V. R. VI. 119. 5
3. त्वया तु नरशार्दूल क्रोधमेवानुवर्तता ।
लघुनेव मनुष्येण स्त्रीत्वमेव पुरस्कृतम् ॥ V. R. VI. 119. 14
4. रघुपतिरपि जातवेदोविशुद्धां प्रगृह्य प्रियां । R. V. XII. 104

There is another instance of Kālidāsa acting in the same way. The only instance in the Rāmāyaṇa, where Sītā has acted in a way, unsuitable to her noble character, is when she rebuked Lakṣmaṇa for not running to help Rāma when she thought he was calling for help. Overcome by circumstances, she doubted, for once, the strength of her own husband and also the loyalty of her brother-in-law, though only for a moment. This lapse on her part is very elaborately described by Vālmīki. It is this one mistake on her part that paved the way for the misery she had to suffer the rest of her life. But, Kālidāsa does not even refer to this incident. It was impossible for him, perhaps, to believe that the noble Sītā could ever stoop to such ugly insinuation against the trusted and beloved Lakṣmaṇa, who was more like a son to her.

In one of his opening verses of the famous Raghuvamśa, Kālidāsa plainly accepts his indebtedness to his predecessors and says, "Even as the thread enters the precious jewel already pierced through by the *Vajra* so also, I shall find my way into the story of this great dynasty which has been described by the great scholars of old."¹ The influence of Vālmīki is obvious all through his works. He has also pronounced his admiration for the other people like Bhāsa, Saumilla and Kaviputra. At the same time we see that his admiration for the elders does not make him a slavish imitator. He is bold enough to leave the trodden path and trail his own. As we have already noticed, the Śurpanakhā episode and the fire-ordeal of Sītā were ignored by Bhāsa. Kālidāsa summarily deals with these episodes which do not in any way ennoble the characters he was portraying. Poets are entitled to change the plot as they like, and the rhetoricians give their sanctions to it. Anandavardhanāchārya

1. अथवा कृतवाग्द्वारे वंशेऽस्मिन्पूर्वसूरिभिः ।

मणौ वज्रसमुत्कीर्णं सूत्रस्येवास्ति मे गतिः ॥

in his *Dhvanyāloka* says, "In this world of poetry, the poet is the creator,"¹ and goes on to explain this fact with ample illustrations.²

Kālidāsa had definite ideas and ideals, and he was quite sure of what he wanted to say to the listeners. This free spirit of the poet, we see very clearly in the fourteenth canto of the *Raghuvamśa* where the banishment of Sītā by Rāma is described in detail. Sītā was about to become a mother and then the bolt from the blue came. The people of Ayodhyā were happy by the rule of Rāma except for the fact that he had accepted Sītā who stayed in the captivity of the king of Lankā.³ The test came not only for Sītā but Rāma also, as Kālidāsa makes clear. The duty of the king is to please his people, and Rāma decided to do his duty and

1. अपारे काव्यसंसारे कविरेकः प्रजापतिः ।
यथास्मै रोचते विश्वं तथैदं परिवर्तते ॥
शृङ्गारी चेत् कविः काव्ये जातं रसमयं जगत् ।
स एव वीतरागश्चेत् नीरसं सर्वमेव तत् ॥
भावानचेतनानपि चेतनवच्चेतनानचेतनवत् ।
व्यवहारयति यथेष्टं सुकविः काव्ये स्वतन्त्रतया ॥ Dh. A. III. p. 498
2. अ. कविना काव्यमुपनिबध्नता सर्वात्मना रसपरतन्त्रेण भवितव्यम् ।
तत्रेतिवृत्ते यदि रसानुगुणं स्थितिं पश्येत् तदेमां भङ्क्त्वापि स्वतन्त्र-
तया रसानुगुणं कथान्तरमुत्पादयेत् । न हि कवेरिति वृत्तमात्रनिर्वहणेन
किञ्चित् प्रयोजनम् । इतिहासादेव तत्सिद्धेः । Dh. A. III. p. 336
- आ. रसानुगुणशब्दार्थचिन्तास्तिमितचेतसः ।
क्षणं स्वरूपस्पर्शोत्था प्रज्ञैव प्रतिमा कवेः ॥
सा हि चक्षुर्भगवतस्तृतीयमिति गीयते ।
येन साक्षात्करोत्येष भावास्त्रैकाल्यवर्तिनः ॥
Vy. Vi. II. 117-118
3. निर्बन्धपृष्ठः स जगाद सर्वं स्तुवन्ति पौराश्रितं त्वदीयम् ।
अन्यत्र रक्षोभवनोषितायाः परिग्रहान्मानवदेव देव्याः ॥
R. V. XIV. 32

keep his fame clear. To do this, he would abandon his own body, nothing to say about the object of senses.¹ Almost the same idea is found in the Rāmāyaṇa. There it is said that he called his brothers and said, "Every one works for fame in this world. And I, to save my name, would abandon not only life, but even you all, much less to say about Sītā."² Whatever may have been the idea of Vālmīki when he made Rāma say, "What to say of Sītā," Kālidāsa gives his own interpretation and that is indicated clearly by the word *Indriyārtha*—object of the senses. According to Kālidāsa the husband and wife are inseparable and if Rāma abandons Sītā, it will be only physically. Whether far or near, she is always one with him. So what he will be missing can only be the sensual pleasures which are of no matter to the noble king. This idea is made clearer in the later statement of Kālidāsa—"Sītā was sent away only from the house by Rāma, who was afraid of the scandals, but not from his heart."³ In the later days, Bhavabhūti also seems to have accepted the same idea as we see him making Rāma say almost the same words.⁴ Describing Sītā's journey to the

1. निश्चित्य चानन्यनिवृत्तिं वाच्यं त्यागेन पत्न्याः परिमार्ष्टुमैच्छत् ।

अपि स्वदेहात्किमुतेन्द्रियाद्यशोघनानां हि यशो गरीयः ॥

R. V. XIV. 35

2. कीर्त्यर्थं तु समारम्भाः सर्वेषां सुमहात्मनाम् ।

अप्यहं जीवितं जह्वां युष्मान्वा पुरुषर्षभाः ॥

अपवादभयाद्भीतः किं पुनर्जनकात्मजाम् ।

तस्माद्भवन्तः पश्यन्तु पतितं शोकसागरे ॥

V. R. VII. 45. 14-15

3. बभूव रामः सहसा सबाष्पस्तुषारवर्षीव सहास्यचन्द्रः ।

कीलीनभीतेन गृहान्निरस्ता न तेन वैदेहसुता मनस्तः ॥

R. V. XIV. 84

4. स्नेहं दयां च सौख्यं च यदि वा जानकीमपि ।

आराधनाय लोकस्य मुञ्चतो नास्ति मे व्यथा ॥

U. R. Ch. I. 12

forest, Kālidāsa says, "She did not realise that her husband has changed from being a *Kalpadruma* into a tree of swords for her."¹ The word *atmani* is specially significant. Rāma has become a tree of swords not only for her but for himself also. This is the idea Kālidāsa wishes to convey.

Sītā was taken to the bank of the Ganga and there Lakṣmaṇa told her the irrevocable order of the king. The sudden bolt from the blue struck down the vine. Kālidāsa says, "Even Mother Earth would not accept Sītā into herself because she began to doubt why the righteous and just king abandoned her."² Perhaps the poet is suggesting the power of scandal to influence even inanimate beings. When she came back to consciousness by the efforts of Lakṣmaṇa she could but wail at her own fate which gave only sufferings as her share. As a good wife, she accepted the order of her husband. When Lakṣmaṇa fell at her feet, she tried to console him saying how well she realised his plight. None has ever shown her pity, but she would not cause any heart-aches to any one if she can help it. She blesses him with all her heart and tells him that he is faultless because he is only obeying the orders of his elder brother.³ The simile used here is very significant. For, it indicates, even Lord Viṣṇu himself had to do something wrong because of his duty towards his elder brother; so also, Lakṣmaṇa was being forced to do an unjust act. The poet had made this clear

1. सा नीयमाना रुचिरान्प्रदेशान्प्रियंकरो मे प्रिय इत्यनन्दत् ।

नावुद्ध कल्पद्रुमतां विहाय जातं तमात्मन्यसिपत्रवृक्षम् ॥

R. V. XIV. 48

2. इक्ष्वाकुवंशप्रभवः कथं त्वां त्यजेदकस्मात्पतिरार्यवृत्तः ।

इति क्षितिः संशयितेव तस्य ददौ प्रवेशं जननी न तावत् ॥

R. V. XIV. 55

3. सीता तमुत्थाप्य जगाद वाक्यं प्रीतास्मि ते सौम्य चिराय जीव ।

बिडौजसा विष्णुरिवाग्रेजेन भ्रात्रा यदित्यं परवानसि त्वम् ॥

R. V. XIV. 59

earlier.¹ Rāma was the king and also the elder brother of Lakṣmaṇa and thus he was doubly bound by duty to obey. By abandoning her in the forest he was actually destroying the sprout of the very dynasty. But it was really no fault of his. And so she hastens to console him. At the remembrance of the implications of this banishment she realised how this scandal would affect her child also. So she began the message to her loving and kind mothers-in-law who, she knew, would understand her well. She requested Lakṣmaṇa to pay her respects to them one by one and remind them of the child of their son who was in her womb then.² The terrible injustice done to her dawned upon her. Her self-respect and the indignation at the wrong done to her, asserted themselves for a moment. The result was the famous message from her to the king. "Go and tell the king", her message began. Not 'my husband' or 'lord', but, 'the king' ! For, it was his kingly duties and the fame as a king that counted with him when he passed the judgement on her. "Go, and tell the king from me thus : Though I have proved my purity by the fire-ordeal in front of you, you abandoned me just because of some scandal-mongers' words. Is it suitable to the great and just dynasty of yours, or to your own wisdom?"³ But Sītā, the noble queen, who was forbearance incarnate, could not harbour any harsh thoughts for any one. Immediately her trend of thought changed and she began to console herself that it was all the results of her own misdeeds in some

1. स शुश्रुवान्मातरि भार्गवेण पितृनियोगात्प्रहृतं द्विषद्वत् ।
प्रत्यग्रहीदग्रजशासनं तदाज्ञा गुरूणां ह्यविचारणीया ॥

R. V. XIV. 46

2. श्वश्रूजनं सर्वमनुक्रमेण विज्ञापय प्रापितमत्प्रणामः ।
प्रजानिषेकं मयि वर्तमानं सूतोरनुध्यायत चेतसेति ॥ R. V. XIV. 60

3. वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात्सराजा वत्तौ विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम् ।
मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासीः श्रुतस्य किं तत्सदृशं कुलस्य ॥

R. V. XIV. 61

previous birth. The *Karma* theory that held root in the Hindu soil, and Kālidāsa's theory of cause and effect, are gaining ground here. The message continued. Her thoughts were wandering. She faced many practical problems. Where could she go now ? She could not, even for a moment, forget that whatever she did would have its effect on Rāma. As the *Prakṛti*, it was for her to keep the torch burning. Thoughts were flashing while she spoke. She could not go to any one else for help or refuge because Rāma was still alive and ruling.¹ She could not put an end to her life because Rāma's child was in her trust and had to be saved.² She had to live for duty's sake and she decided to live. Sītā knew that she was Rāma's *Śakti* and he will need her, if not in this birth, may be some time after. But when the time comes she will be ready with greater strength and greater love obtained by penance, to supplement him. Rāma had decided to play the role of the king and so she claimed his protection as his subject. As a king, it was his duty to protect all the *Varnas* and *Āśramas*. So, as per duty, he will have to protect her, as a woman belonging to the hermitage.³ The whole message is an expression of mixed feelings. Indignation at the injustice done to her; the love and consideration for the husband who, she knows, is in a much worse condition than herself due to this unending separation; the remembrance of the fate of their children; and the sense of wronged self-respect : all are vying with

1. निशाचरोपप्लुतभर्तृकाणां तपस्विनीनां भवतः प्रसादात् ।

भूत्वा शरण्या शरणार्थमन्यं कथं प्रपत्स्ये त्वयि दीप्यमाने ॥

R. V. XIV. 64

2. किं वा तवात्यन्तवियोगमोघे कुर्यामुपेक्षां हतजीवितेस्मिन् ।

स्याद्रक्षणीयं यदि मे न तेजस्त्वदीयमन्तर्गतमन्तरायः ॥

R. V. XIV. 65

3. नृपस्य वर्णाश्रमपालनं यत्स एव धर्मो मनुना प्रणीतः ।

निर्वासिताप्येवमतस्त्वयाहं तपस्विसामान्यमवेक्षणीया ॥ R. V. XIV. 67

one another in this message. Sītā realizes fully well that she was banished not by Rāma, her beloved husband, but by Rāma, the ideal king. So the message was meant really for the *King*, reminding him of his duty to herself even as a subject. This is the Sītā who is to be revered and held up to be worshipped throughout the ages as the ideal of Indian womanhood.

Lakṣmaṇa was gone; and then Vālmīki, the sage who was struck by grief when he saw one of the two birds killed by the cruel arrow of the hunter, came on the scene.¹ Once more, we have Kālidāsa speaking for himself, after showing the society as it was. Now he speaks through Vālmīki. Of course there is a great similarity between the words of the sage here and in the Rāmāyaṇa. He consoled Sītā at the very outset, assuring her of his confidence in her purity. "I know from my inner sense that thou art abandoned by the husband who is annoyed by the false scandals. Do not be sad, my daughter, but believe, thou hast reached the abode of thy father, who is living in another city."² He continued to tell her that she is welcome to the hermitage and convinced her of the truth of his statement by quoting proofs as to why it was his duty to look after her.³ This portion is more or less a literal adoption of the words in the Rāmāyaṇa. But, the denouncement of Rāma by Vālmīki in so many plain words is Kālidāsa's own. He does not hesitate a moment to denounce the injustice done by Rāma. He

1. निषादविद्वाण्डजदर्शनोत्थः श्लोकत्वमापद्यत यस्य शोकः ।

R. V. XIV. 70

2. जाने विस्मृतां प्रणिधानतस्त्वां मिथ्यापवादधुभितेन भर्ता ।

तन्मा व्यथिष्ठा विषयान्तरस्थं प्राप्तासि वैदेहि पितुनिकेतम् ॥

R. V. XIV. 72

3. तवोरुकीर्तिः श्वसुरः सखा मे सतां भवोच्छेदकरः पिता ते ।

धुरिस्थिता त्वं पतिदेवतानां किं तन्न येनासि ममानुकम्प्या ॥

R. V. XIV. 74

may be good; he may be strong; he may be truthful; but he is heartless and unjust and I denounce him : this seems to be the attitude of Kālidāsa when he makes Vālmiki say, "Though he has destroyed the thorn of the three worlds, though he is truthful and humble, indeed I am angry with that elder brother of Bharata, because he has acted unjustly towards you."¹ After this outburst the sage calms down and describes to her how she has a right to live in the calm and tranquil surroundings of his hermitage.

In the next few verses, Kālidāsa makes it clear that, if Sītā was doing penance, Rāma had to do greater penance, for, the fault was again his, the *Man's*. He was anxious to save his name. But what greater infamy could there have been than the clear injustice he did to his noble wife ? At the time, his eyes were blinded by the intoxication of his status and the pride of his noble lineage. His words to his brothers clearly point out this. "I cannot allow such a shame to fall on the noble solar dynasty,"² he said. His reference to Sītā as a possession and such other statements were new traits in his character which were not there before he won the victory over Rāvaṇa and before he ascended the throne of Ayodhyā. While he was in the forest with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa and till he conquered Laṅkā, his attitude towards his wife was ennoblingly different. The change that came over him after he held the sceptre, seems similar to that which was seen in Duṣyanta at his court. Even as Duṣyanta realized his loss only after Śakuntalā was lost to him, so also Rāma realised his own mistake the moment he

1. उत्खातलोकत्रयकण्टकेऽपि सत्यप्रतिज्ञेऽप्यविकत्यनेऽपि ।

त्वां प्रत्यकस्मात्कलुषप्रवृत्तावस्त्येव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे ॥

R. V. XIV. 73

2. राजर्षिवंशस्य रविप्रसूतेरुपस्थितः पश्यत कीदृशोऽयम् ।

मत्तः सदाचारशुचेः कलङ्कः पयोदवातादिव दर्पणस्य ॥

R. V. XIV. 37

found himself bereft of his beloved and noble wife. Kālidāsa himself vouchsafes to this fact : "Sītā was banished by the king, who was afraid of the scandals, from his home only, but not from his heart."¹

Twelve years passed. Sītā had borne and brought up the twins who would continue the solar dynasty. The sons were accepted by the father. And he was ready to accept Sītā at the exhortation of Vālmiki. But, the weak fame-hunter that he was, he wanted Sītā to convince the people about her purity. Herein lies the difference between the other heroes portrayed by Kālidāsa and Rāma. While the others were ready to accept the truth as soon as they were convinced about it, Rāma did not have the courage of his convictions. It was not enough that he knew the facts. He could act according to his convictions only if his people also were convinced. This remained as an obstacle in the final reunion of Rāma and Sītā.

There is a great similarity between the two couples that Kālidāsa chose to portray : Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta on the one hand and Sītā and Rāma on the other. The difference between the two is also remarkable. The love between the husband and wife was equally strong and noble in both the cases. The sincerity and loyalty also were unsurpassed. Cause of repudiation is basically the same in both cases, namely the doubt of being polluted by another. But the difference lies in the heroes themselves and their respective outlook on life. While the doubt was genuine in the case of Duṣyanta, as far as he knew, it was completely baseless in the case of Rāma. In the first instance, the fault was not his own and so there was possibility of redemption. But, in the other instance, the weakness was in Rāma himself and so there could be no remedy. Again and again Sītā was called upon to convince the people of a fact for

1. बभूव रामः सहसा सबाष्पस्तुषारवर्षीं सहस्यचन्द्रः ।

कौलीनभीतेन गृहान्निरस्ता न तेन वैदेहसुता मनस्तः ॥ R. V. XIV. 84.

which Rāma himself needed no proof. So, the only way open to Sītā was to rise above the very possibility of doubt. As an obedient wife, she accepted the order of her husband and came forward to convince the people as to her pure and irreproachable character. Her very appearance was enough to make the people bow down before her in reverence. Kālidāsa describes her in his typical way: "Wearing the orange coloured ascetic garb, with eyes fixed on her feet, she convinced the people of her purity by her divine and peaceful appearance itself."¹

She had fulfilled her duty as a wife to Rāma, when he was exiled for fourteen long years. She fulfilled her duty as a mother till her sons were grown up and able to take their rightful place near their father. Till then she forgot herself for the sake of others. Now the time had come for her to do her duty to herself; to do justice to herself which was denied to her all these years due to consideration for others. She stood before the royal assembly and called upon the powers of nature to prove her greatness. "As I have not known any one else but my husband by words, deeds or thoughts, so, O mother Earth, take me into yourself."² Mother Earth had to obey the noble daughter and Sītā was taken away into the lap of her mother. That is how Sītā convinced the doubting world once for all. The poet has faithfully followed the foot-steps of Vālmiki in this later portion also. But even in following it up, he has expounded the full meaning of the whole incident as none else could or would. The picture of Sītā, as portrayed by Kālidāsa, is that of a woman unique in this world. It is a woman who, fully confident of her power, is still humble

1. काषायपरिवीतेन स्वपदापितचक्षुषा ।

अन्वमीयत शुद्धेति शान्तेन वपुर्षव सा ॥

R. V. XIV. 77

2. वाङ्मनकर्मभिः पत्यौ व्यभिचारो यथा न मे ।

तथा विश्वंभरे देवि मामन्तर्धातुमर्हसि ॥

R. V. XV. 81

loving, kind and considerate; one who is capable of thinking about every body else before herself; and yet the one who never forgets her own self-respect and dignity as part and parcel of this universe; and the one who realises her duty to all around her, while remembering her duty to herself also—the highest ideal of Indian womanhood as visualised by Kālidāsa.

Woman, being the asset of the race, has a high position. At the same time, if she errs, she falls not alone but also drags along every one with her. Hence he is careful to tell the world that a mistake committed knowingly or unknowingly, specially by a woman, cannot go without producing its natural consequences. We have examples in abundance of this. First of all, there is Urvaśī, the most beautiful woman of heaven, who was attracted by the greatest of the heroes of the day. There was nothing wrong in it. But, when they both allowed the attraction to become an infatuation, bad enough to make them forget their respective duties, the punishment was inevitable. Urvaśī forgot her duties at the heavenly court and brought down on her head the curse of her preceptor. And the king forgot his duties to the state and also towards his lawfully wedded wife. The result was the separation of the couple in the Kumāra-vana. Urvaśī became a creeper, due to the curse, hanging over the forest, while Purūravas, having fallen a victim to his senses, was wandering alone in the forest weeping and wailing like a mad man. Urvaśī had to be the silent witness to the plight of the high and mighty king. There could not have been a greater punishment for a loving woman. Lapses do bring punishments in their trail; but they are meant only as chastisement and not for revenge. If there was a curse, there was the remedy also. Urvaśī had enough time to ponder over the whole situation. As a result, she was a different person, when she was brought back to life by the power of the *Sangamanīya Ratna* (uniting jewel). Urvaśī was no more proud or angry. On the other hand, the king

turned his attention towards the duties of the state. Things took a happy turn from that day onwards. Mānavaka testifies to the fact that all the king's wives are happy and peaceful along with the king; he has begun to attend to the duties of the state; and everything is well and happy.¹ The infatuation for the heavenly damsel has developed into real love and the real union of the couple has become possible.

In the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, the same idea is presented with greater emphasis. The infatuation of Śakuntalā made her forget her duties as the hostess. The curse of Durvāsas came as the chastisement. The ring given by the king was there as the remedy to serve at the right time. The episode of Nandinī in the *Raghuvamśa* is another example of the same. Sudakṣiṇā was the indirect cause of Dilipa's overlooking Kāmadhenu's presence. Everywhere, what the poet wanted to show was that, woman, being the balancing power, had to be very very careful at every step that she took. If she erred, she would have to make amends also.

Kālidāsa was not a mere dramatist who wrote for the sake of pleasure alone. He wrote with a purpose, and every character he portrayed and every incident he represented, had a message to convey, the main purpose being, to tell the woman what she was, and to remind the man that he should not trespass on the rights of his counterpart. In fulfilling this aim, he has given us an opportunity to have glimpses of society here and there. There is much information about maidens and wives throughout his works. But very little is said about the widows. The idea seems to be that, having lost her counterpart, the best thing for the woman is to retire from the world and live a simple and non-interfering

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1. विदूषकः—ही ही भोः दिष्ट्या चिरस्य कालस्योर्वशीसहायो नन्दनवन-
प्रमुखेषु देवतारण्येषु विहृत्य प्रतिनिवृत्तः प्रिय वयस्यः । प्रविश्य नगर-
मिदानीं ससत्कारोपचारैः प्रकृतिभिरनुरज्यमानो राज्यं करोति ।

life. The only direct example we get is that of Parivrājikā in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, who by her own testimony took to ascetic garbs when she was left destitute by the death of her brother.¹ Even there, it is not widowhood that prompted her to take up that life. She had become a widow long before and was staying with her brother. Finally when she was left alone in the world by the death of her brother, she took to ascetic life. When this story was told to Agnimitra, he showed his appreciation by the words, "that is the way with good people."² This is proof enough to show that women of good families took to the orange robe as a token of retirement from worldly life, and such women were looked upon with reverence in society.

It has been already noticed that the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* did not consider widows to be of much value. There are many statements found in both the above works which go to prove that widow re-marriages were not looked upon favourably by the society. Manu ordained that a woman should lead the rest of her life in penance and in remembrance of her demised husband. She should not even take the name of another man after the death of her lord.³ The widow seems to have been considered an unfortunate and pitiable being. In this connection, it is interesting to note the description of "Dhūmāvati" one of the ten *Śaktis*, as found in the *Tantras*. There are ten *Mahāvidyās* described there, namely, Kālī, Tārā, Shoḍaśī, Bhairavī, Chinna-mastā, Bagalā, Mātangi, Kamalā and Dhūmāvati. Of all these ten, Dhūmāvati is described as bereft of her Bhairava and hence a widow.⁴ She is said to be hungry and thirsty,

1. परिव्रजिका—ततो भ्रातुः शरीरमग्निसात्कृत्वा पुनर्नवीकृतवैधव्य—

दुःखया मया त्वदीयं देशमवतीर्य इमे काषाये गृहीते ।

M. A. V. p. 248

2. अग्निमित्रः—युक्तः सज्जनस्यैष पन्थाः ।

M. A. V. p. 249

3. न तु नामापि गृह्णीयात्पत्यौ प्रेते परस्य तु ।

Manu. V. 157

4. धूमावती महाविद्या विघवारूपधारिणी ।

Tantrasāra. II.

haggard, tired and disgusted with the peculiar form of her existence.¹ This description of Dhūmāvatī is very significant when one considers the position of widow in society. The conception that man and wife together make a complete whole implies that the widow, just like the word without its meaning, becomes bereft of life, as it were, and thus discontented and unhappy. This side of the woman's life had nothing enhancing in it, and perhaps that is why Kālidāsa preferred to pass over this phase without any special comments in any way.

There is no reference to the custom of *Satī* in the works of Kālidāsa, either in the plays or in the poems. Though the lack of freedom for women is again and again referred to, seclusion within the four walls of the household does not seem to be the custom. Of course, the veil is shown as a sign of respectability. That does not seem to be the general way. Mālavikā was covered with a veil before she was given in marriage and Śakuntalā was wearing a veil when, after her marriage, she was in the presence of the king. Also at the time when Bhāsa wrote, the veil had already come into vogue, as a token of high and noble birth, even as found in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata.

Kālidāsa seems to support the theory of "women first", at every possible occasion, though this idea is not very familiar to the present day Hindu society. When Dilipa reached the hermitage of Vasiṣṭha, it is said that first he helped the queen to get down and then he himself alighted from the chariot."² In another place, where there was a commotion in the army of Raghu due to the attack of the wild elephant, it is described how the soldiers were eager to

1. विवर्णा चञ्चला रुष्टा दीर्घा च मलिनांबरा ।...

क्षुत्पिपासादिता नित्यं भयदा कलहप्रिया ।...

2. तामवारोहयत्पत्नीं रथादवततार च ।

Tantrasāra. II.

R. V. I. 54

save the women and children first.¹

Of all the relationship between men and women, that of husband and wife seems to have been held as the highest and noblest by Kālidāsa. The real duties of women begin only after their marriage. As we have already noticed, there is much similarity between the ideals propagated in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, and the rules of Manu seem to have close affinity with them. Kālidāsa also seems to be in agreement with many of the ideals propagated there, specially those concerning the duties of the wife. He is of the opinion that where the women err, there can be no safety for any one. He firmly believes that women should be always protected and cherished by all who desire happiness.

The admiration of the poet for women in general is seen all over his works. The wife devoted to her husband and the mother of heroic sons specially command his respect. The first woman mentioned in the Raghuvamśa is Sudakṣiṇā, the queen of Dilīpa. She is described thus : he had a wife named Sudakṣiṇā belonging to the Magadha family, and who was the Dakṣiṇā of the sacrifice.² He presents a society in which polygamy was prevalent. But, he for one, does not approve of the custom, nor does he believe that any man can love more than ² woman. He, with his belief of the identity of man and wife, seems to hold the theory of "marriage being made in heaven", and also "one man for one woman". This idea is repeatedly shown in all his works, directly or indirectly. It is said in the first canto of the Raghuvamśa that Sudakṣiṇā alone was consi-

1. स च्छिन्नबन्धद्रुतयुग्यशून्यं भग्नाक्षपर्यस्थरथं क्षणेन ।

रामापरित्राणविहस्तयोधं सेनानिवेशं तुमुलं चकार ॥ R. V. V. 49

2. तस्य दाक्षिण्यरूढेन नाम्ना मगधवंशजा ।

पत्नी सुदक्षिणेत्यासीदध्वरस्येव दक्षिणा ॥

R. V. I. 31

dered as the asset of his family.¹ The earth was considered as the real wife for the kings of ancient days, and the mother of a son the asset of the dynasty. This idea is repeated in the *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* also through the assurance given to the two friends by Duṣyanta.² In the case of Indumatī, Sītā and Umā, the question of a rival did not arise at all.

The main reason of a man attacking or denouncing the woman is the pride of wealth, beauty or learning. In spite of the message of the great sage Kaṇva and all the explanations given by the simple and truthful people of the hermitage, the king very calmly put a question, "What? Am I married to this lady?"³ That insulting question was enough to put an end to the patience of the fiery-tempered Śārṅgarava. Detached and dry ascetic though he was, he had not liked the liberty Śakuntalā had taken in the matter of marriage. The callousness of the seemingly righteous king, at that moment, infuriated him beyond control. That lapse in morals in such a good king can have only one reason—the intoxication of power. It is said in the Śāstras that youth, wealth, power and indiscretion, every one of these, leads to destruction.⁴ Their combination was present in the court of Duṣyanta. It is the belief of the poet that no normal man can ever disgrace a woman or turn away from his duty towards her. So he makes Śārṅgarava come out with the question, whether it was the dislike of a thing done by him, or aversion to duty, or deliberate intention to insult, that

1. कलत्रवन्तमात्मानमवरोधे महत्यपि ।

तथा मेने मनस्विन्या लक्ष्म्या च वसुधाधिपः ॥

R. V. I. 32

2. राजा—परिग्रहबहुत्वेऽपि द्वे प्रतिष्ठे कुलस्य मे ।

समुद्रवसना चोर्वी सखी च युवयोरियम् ॥

Ab. Ś. III. 18

3. राजा—किं चात्रभवती मया परिणीतपूर्वा ।

Ab. Ś. V. p. 62

4. यौवनं धनसम्पत्तिः प्रभुत्वमविवेकता ।

एकैकमप्यनर्थाय किमु यत्र चतुष्टयम् ॥

S. R. B. p. 165

prompted the behaviour of the king. He adds that such feelings are common to those who are intoxicated with the pride of power.¹ The poet seems to point out that man, having got the upper hand over woman due to the sanction of the society, takes mean advantage of the goodwill and love of woman. Once she is married to him, the man can do what he wills. But, those conditions cannot take him far. Destruction alone would be the result and Śārṅgarava, when asked by the King sarcastically, "Oh! truthful one, accepting all that you said, may I know what I am going to gain by deceiving her?"² gives the burning answer, "*Vini-pātaḥ*"—eternal fall. That one word ought to have convinced the King that no good could ever come to him unless and until that pride was crushed and he was completely purged of his intoxication by burning repentance. This prediction of Śārṅgarava is fulfilled in the end. Long repentance purified the *aiśvaryamattatā*—power intoxication—of the king. His heart became free of lust and illusions. And then he met and recognized the mother of his son who was to keep up his name and his dynasty. By falling at her feet, who by her own penances and sacrifices had purified herself and also him, Duṣyanta got redeemed of his sins of omissions as well as commissions. The same idea is shown by the poet at the banishment of Sītā by Rāma³ in the *Raghuvaṃśa*.

In *Manusmṛti*, we find quite a few passages which praise the wife.⁴ Kālidāsa seems to be in complete agreement with them. The advice given to Śakuntalā by her

1. शाङ्गरवः—किं कृतकार्यद्वेषो घर्मं प्रति विमुखता कृतावज्ञा ।

मूर्च्छन्त्यमी विकाराः प्रायेणैश्वर्यमत्तेषु ॥ Ab. Ś. V. 18

2. राजा—भोः सत्यवादिन् ! अम्युपगतं तावदस्माभिरेवम् ।

किं पुनरिमामतिसंधाय लभ्यते ।

शाङ्गरवः—विनिपातः ।

Ab. Ś. V. p. 65

3. Vide Chapter III. p. 150-154, *supra*

4. Manu. IX. 25-29

father describes the duty of the wife very clearly. She being the *Patni*, the protecting goddess of the household, has a duty to everybody in the family, from the parents-in-law to the lowest servant. Only that woman who follows the above code of behaviour can claim the name, *Gṛhiṇī*; otherwise, she will be the cause of miseries in the family.¹ Once again we hear Kaṇva telling Śakuntalā that she would forget the sorrow of separation from him, when she became engrossed in the heavy duties of the wife.² He seems to agree with the ruling of Manu, that only that woman who is well-versed in the household works, who is the mother of sons and who dedicates herself completely to make the husband happy, deserves the name *Bhāryā*³—wife. But, the difference between Kālidāsa and the others lies in this that, while the latter emphasize the duties of the wife to the husband only, Kālidāsa insists on mutual loyalty and fulfilment of duties. He seems to hold the view expressed in the *Harivaṃśa* : “The husband inconsiderate in his actions, fallen or vicious, is saved by his wife, who saves herself also.”

The ultimate aim of every human being is the good and happiness of all. To achieve this, man and woman are equally responsible. Both have their respective duties to perform in supplementing and complementing each other. We have seen this idea in his three plays, and also in the *Kumārasambhava* and the *Raghuvamśa*. The *Kumārasambhava* is not the story of the birth of Kumāra, but, the story of the union of Umā and Mahēśvara for the

1. यान्त्येवं गृहिणीपदं युवतयोः वामाः कुलस्याधयः । Ab. Ś. IV. 18

2. कण्वः—अभिजनवतो भर्तुः श्लाघ्ये स्थिता गृहिणीपदे

विभवगुरुभिः कृत्यैस्तस्य प्रतिक्षणमाकुला ।

तनयमचिरात्प्राचीवार्कं प्रसूय च पावनं

मम विरहजां न त्वं वत्से शुचं गणयिष्यसि ॥

Ab. Ś. IV. 19

3. सा भार्या या गृहे दक्षा सा भार्या या प्रजावती ।

सा भार्या या पतिप्राणा सा भार्या या पतिव्रता ॥

M. Bh. I

sake of Kumāra, the saviour of the world. The Rāmāyaṇa is not the story of Rāma alone. If there was no Sītā, there would have been no Rāmāyaṇa at all. Urvaśī, Dhārīṇī and Śakuntalā were responsible for making Purūravas, Agni-mitra and Duṣyanta respectively what they were. We cannot imagine Dilīpa without Sudakṣiṇā and Aja without Indumatī. Kālidāsa firmly believes that the society is constituted by man and woman with equal capacity to good and great things for the fulfilment of each other. It is this idea that he presented before the world through the opening stanza of his Raghuvamśa, where he says, "I bow to Pārvaṭi and Parameśwara, the parents of the universe, who are intermingled with each other, even as the word is with its meaning."¹ In this one stanza, the poet has set forth the highest ideal of womanhood. Even as the word is never separate from its meaning, so also is husband never separate from the wife. He repeats the same idea of oneness in the Kumārasambhava, where he says, "You are accepted to be the *Prakṛti*, which translates the aims of the *Puruṣa* into actions; and you are also the *Puruṣa* who is a passive witness to all those actions."² All his works, one after another, prove this same idea, that, the *Prakṛti*, the woman, is the power that works, while man is the witness who also gives inspiration. This truth, when applied to the material world, shows the high and responsible position occupied by woman. This is the idea which makes Kālidāsa agree with the dictum of Manusmṛti—"Where the women are worshipped, there live the gods; and where they are not, all rituals are futile."³

1. वागर्थाविव संपृक्तौ वागर्थप्रतिपत्तये ।

जगतः पितरौ वन्दे पार्वतीपरमेश्वरौ ॥

R. V. I. 1

2. त्वामामनन्ति प्रकृतिं पुरुषार्थप्रवर्तिनीम् ।

तद्दक्षिणमुदासीनं त्वामेव पुरुषं विदुः ॥

K. S. II. 13

3. यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवता ।

यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः ॥

Manu. III. 56

True to this idea, the husband had definite duties towards the wife according to the earlier works in Sanskrit literature. He was not even to think of enjoying any pleasure that his wife cannot possibly participate in. He is advised not to say anything unpleasant to his wife, even if provoked.¹ Elsewhere, it is said, "By taking care of the wife and by protecting her the man gets the name *Bharta* and *Pati* respectively. He has no right to these names if he fails to perform these duties."²

The general attitude of man and wife towards each other, as found in both the epics, is more or less the same. Mutual fidelity between husband and wife was the main idea held up during this period. If there is complete harmony between the two, the house would be a heaven; if there is discord, it would be hell.³ In the *Mahābhārata*, it is plainly said, "Even if the house is full of sons, daughters and daughters-in-law, it is quite empty if the wife is not there."⁴ In another place, it is said, "House is not really the house, but it is the housewife that makes it. The home without the mistress is much worse than the forest."⁵ And also, the

1. अप्रियोक्तोपि दाराणां न ब्रूयादप्रियं बुधः ।

रीतिं प्रीतिं च धर्मं च तदायत्तमवेक्ष्य च ॥ M. Bh. I. 86-70

2. भरणाद्धि स्त्रियो भर्ता पालनाद्धि पतिः स्मृतः ।

गुणस्यास्य निवृत्तौ तु न भर्ता न पुनः पतिः ॥ M. Bh. XIII. 251. 35

3. आनुकूल्यं हि दम्पत्योः त्रिवर्गोदयहेतवे ।

अनुकूलं कलत्रं चेत् त्रिदिवेन हि किं ततः ॥

प्रतिकूलं कलत्रं चेन्नरकेण हि किं ततः ।

गृहाश्रमः सुखार्थाय पत्नीमूलं तु तत्सुखम् ॥

P. P. Uttara Khanda. 223. 36-37

4. पुत्रपौत्रवधूभृत्यैराकीर्णमपि सर्वतः ।

भार्याहीनं गृहस्थस्य शून्यमेव गृहं भवेत् ॥ M. Bh. XIII. 144. 4

5. न गृहं गृहमित्याहुः गृहिणी गृहमुच्यते ।

गृहं तु गृहिणीहीनं कान्तारादतिरिच्यते ॥ M. Bh. XIII. 144. 6

wife is the God-given friend and companion.¹ The wife in her turn is warned that she alone is worthy of the name *woman*, with whom the husband is pleased.²

Patnī is explained by Pāṇini as the helper in sacrifice—*Yajña*.³ The word *Yajña* is very comprehensive. It includes every one of the activities that contribute towards the welfare of the whole universe, from the highest soul to the lowest worm. The idea of *Yajña* is explained and expounded clearly in the Bhagvadgītā,⁴ which in its turn is the summary of the teachings contained in all the Upaniṣads. There it is said that the Creator having created all the people along with the *Yajñas* told them that those will yield them all their desires. The warning is also sounded there that those who indulge in any activity, except in the spirit of sacrifice, become bound by those, and will be dragged down.⁵ Everything that leads to progress depends on the *Yajña*, and the woman who encourages, helps and participates in that alone can claim the title *Patnī*. And *Patnī* thus becomes the inseparable partner of the *Pati* every moment of his life.

The description of his wife by the *Yakṣa* in the Megha-

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1. भार्या देवकृतः सखा । M. Bh. I. 86
 2. सा हि स्त्रीत्यवगन्तव्या यस्यां भर्तानुष्यति । M. Bh. XIII. 134. 12
 3. पत्युर्नो यज्ञसंयोगे । 4/1/33 । पतिशब्दस्य नकारादेशः स्याद्यज्ञेन सम्बन्धे ।
वसिष्ठस्य पत्नी । तत्कर्तृक यज्ञफलस्य फल भोक्त्रीत्यर्थः । दम्पत्योः सहा-
धिकारात् । S. Kau. I. p. 121
 4. सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वं एष वोस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥
देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥.....
तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् । Bh. G. III. 10-15
 5. यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तौ मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।
भुञ्जते ते त्वष्टा पापाः ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥ Bh. G. III. 13

dūta gives a clear picture of a good and loving woman as conceived by Kālidāsa.¹ The sorrow of Aja at the demise of his wife Indumatī is another example of the high regard in which women are held by the poet. Aja wails : "The mistress of the household, the minister friend, dearest disciple in the fine arts and what not, has been taken away from me by this cruel Death, who has taken you away."² The description of Arundhatī in the Kumārasāmbhava is another example of Kālidāsa's conception about woman as wife. "In the midst of those seven sages, the chaste and pure Arundhatī, the wife of Vasiṣṭha, with her eyes fixed on the feet of her husband, shone like the very fulfilment of his penances. Lord Śiva looked at her and the ṛṣis with the same respectful eyes; for, it is the character that counts and not the sex, as far as great people are concerned."³ Here, the poet clearly expresses what he thinks about women. He adds, "By seeing her, Lord Śiva became more desirous to get married, for, good wives are indeed the inspiration and help for all righteous actions."⁴ The same idea recorded by Manu,⁵ is accepted and propagated in a wider sense here.

The question naturally arises, if this is so, why was

1. Meghadūta. Part II. 22-24

2. गृहिणी सचिवः सखी मिथः प्रियशिष्या ललिते कलाविधौ ।

करुणाविमुखेन मृत्युना हरता त्वां वद किं न मे हृतम् ॥

R. U. VIII. 67

3. तेषां मध्यगता साध्वी पत्युः पादापितेक्षणा ।

साक्षादिव तपः सिद्धिर्बभासे बह्वरुधती ॥

तामगौरवभेदेन मुनींश्चापश्यदीश्वरः ।

स्त्रीपुमानित्यनास्थैषा वृत्तं हि महितं सताम् ॥ K. S. VI. 11-12

4. तद्दर्शनादभूच्छंभोर्भूयान्दारार्थमादरः ।

क्रियाणां खलु धर्म्याणां सत्पत्न्यो मूलकारणम् ॥ K. S. VI. 13

5. अपत्यं धर्मकार्याणि शुश्रूषा रतिरुत्तमा ।

दाराधीनस्तथा स्वर्गः पितृणामात्मनश्च ह ॥ Manu. IX. 28

Kāmadeva, the cause of union between man and woman, burnt ? The answer is obvious. As has been explained at an earlier context, it was lust, illusion and sensual love that was burnt in the form of Kāmadeva. Kālidāsa is called the "Bard of Love" by many. He has depicted love in its different aspects : the care-free love against the background of court intrigues, romantic passion which reaches the summits of madness and also the love that slowly grows and gradually develops into the ideal love with its evils purged off by suffering. But what he actually held up as the ideal was the love after marriage; love, which protects the hearth and home and through it the whole universe. Love in the wider sense of the word is praised by Kālidāsa. This all-pervading and chaste love, that is depicted in the *Ardha Narīśvara* form of Śiva, is the symbol of Kālidāsa's ideal, which he adores and praises in the opening stanza of *Raghuvaṃśa*. The inter-dependence of husband and wife in this way is once again emphasized by him in the sixth canto of the *Kumārasaṃbhava*, where the seven sages tell Himavān that he should unite his daughter with Śiva, even as the word with its meaning.¹

This idea is repeatedly found in many Purāṇas. The *Līṅgapurāṇa*² and the *Skāṇḍa Purāṇa*³ refer to Umā and Maheśwara as the word and its meaning. The latter goes a step further and says that while the parents of the universe are as word and its meaning, the child Skāṇḍa is the *Rasa*.

According to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Swayamvara* and *Gāndharva* type of marriages were not upheld. Sītā bears testimony to the accepted custom that father is the one who is entitled to give away the daughter in marriage.⁴ Another

1. तमर्थमिव भारत्या सुतया योक्तुमर्हसि ।

K. S. VI. 79

2. अर्थः शम्भुः शिवा वाणी ।

Li. P

3. रुद्रोऽर्थोऽक्षरस्तोमा तस्मै तस्यै नमो नमः ।

Sk. P.

4. इह लोके च पितृभिर्या स्त्री यस्य महामते ।

अद्भिर्दत्ता स्वधर्मेण प्रेत्यभावेऽपि तस्य सा ॥

V. R. II. 29. 18

example is that of the hundred daughters of Kuśadhvaaja, who refused the advances of god Vāyu, saying that they cannot and will not go beyond the orders of their father.¹ As has been already seen, Kālidāsa also favours this type of marriage, which is named *Brāhma* by Manu. Once married, then she belongs to the husband for good and evil. Sisters, brothers, parents and children enjoy the fruits of their own deeds. Wife alone shares the fate of the husband in weal or woe.² This is the idea that prevails in the code of Manu. But there is a vast difference between the husband and the wife as far as the rights and privileges go. The idea seems to be that nothing could correct and rehabilitate the man except the wholesome influence of his wife. Perhaps this was the psychology that prompted the law-givers to enforce the duties of the wife with greater care and strictness.

It is interesting to note that the ideal propagated in the Rāmāyaṇa appealed to the people much more than the fiery valour of the women portrayed in the Mahābhārata. It was not Damayantī, who boldly proclaimed a second *swayamvara* faked though it was; not Draupadī, who questioned the right of Yudhiṣṭhira to pawn her; not even Sāvitrī, who stood up against the Lord of Death himself for the sake of her husband's life. that found favour with the people and also the majority of writers in later days, but it was sitā, the patient and forbearing, noble, dignified and yet submissive in all conditions and circumstances, who was accepted as the ideal by posterity. Whether these characters and happen-

1. मा भूत्स कालो दुर्मेधः पितरं सत्यवादिनम् ।

नावमन्यस्व धर्मेण स्वयंवरमुपास्महे ॥

पिता हि प्रभुरस्माकं दैवतं परमं हि नः ।

यस्य नो दास्यति पिता स नो भर्ता भविष्यति ॥ V. R. I. 32. 21-22

2. आर्यपुत्र पिता माता भ्राता पुत्रस्तथा स्नुषा ।

स्वानि पुण्यानि भुञ्जानाः स्वं स्वं भाग्यमुपासते ॥

भर्तुर्भाग्यं तु भार्यका प्राप्नोति पुरुषर्षभ ।

V. R. II. 27. 3-4

ings were purely legendary or otherwise is not the question. The fact remains that fiction or history reflect the trends of thought that characterized the age.

It is obvious that the ideal position enjoyed by women in the Vedic period was gradually deteriorating. The foreign invasions and changes that were coming over the religious ideals, combined with the natural physical disabilities, paved the way for the slow but sure descent of woman from the equal status she shared with man. Though there were opposing elements who tried to stem the tide, they could not get much success. Kālidāsa was witnessing such a time, and seeing both sides of the picture he wanted to point out how the natural adverse consequences could be avoided. The equal responsibility of man and woman in contributing to the welfare of the society was a foregone conclusion with him. The ideal of the second *Āśrama*, as the mainstay of human life, seemed to the poet as the real thing. Hence he portrayed the ideal of his vision, the woman who is really one with her husband, just as the sweet expressions that enhance the sublime imagination and wisdom. He believed that woman had her own sphere of activity just as the man has his own, and working together with mutual understanding and unity, they both jointly lead the universe to the greatest bliss. This is the ideal that he pictured in all his works as far as the wife was concerned. In fact this is the noblest and most important role for women as visualized by Kālidāsa and portrayed in his plays.

Certain critics are of the opinion that Kālidāsa did not look upon women favourably. They refer to the widely known legend about the master-poet being an ignoramus in the beginning and consequently having been turned out of the palace by his wife, princess Vidyottamā, as the cause for this supposed aversion. They support their conjecture by quoting the stray deprecating statements about women found in his works and also the use of the synonym *abala* for them

in the Meghadūta and in one or two other places. The basis of the conjecture, as well as the proofs quoted, are equally flimsy and cannot hold water for a moment. The statements of the various characters at the different places are not to be taken away from the context when they are to be interpreted. The ideas embodied in those statements can be correctly understood only after a close and sympathetic study of each word and its significance at the proper place. All those verses and passages have been taken up in this treatise, and everywhere it has been seen that Kālidāsa's adoration for the wife and mother has been prominent and no bitterness against women is found anywhere.

Taking up the word *abalā* used for women, we have to be more careful. We have already seen how Kālidāsa was disturbed at the fast deteriorating condition of women and also the unsympathetic attitude of certain sections of the people, who considered women to be fetters that bound them to this world. Perhaps he was witnessing the process by which the rules of the law-givers, originally meant for the safety of the hearth and home and for the protection of women, were being turned into fetters for them. As all scholars agree, Kālidāsa believed in thought-provoking suggestions more than open declarations. The word *abalā* was being used as a synonym for woman since very early days and the reason is quite obvious. The very word sets one thinking, why is the woman an *abalā*? One does not have to search far for an answer. By nature, she has to fulfil the duty of becoming the mother along with all the accompanying sufferings and difficulties which made her physically weak in comparison with the sturdy physique of the man, while the sufferings of motherhood and the necessity of meeting emergencies made her resourceful, understanding and sympathetic. The man with his physical strength and arguing intellect may achieve much on the materialistic plane; but to have well-being and happiness, the qualities of the heart are necessary.

Hence it is that women have become worshippable and adorable in the eyes of all thinking men. It is this peculiarity of woman, this self-abnegation, love and consideration that has really made her an *abalā*. And Kālidāsa's intention in using this word at places seems to be nothing else than attracting the attention of the people to this irrefutable fact, and reminding them of their duties to her who is prepared to sacrifice her everything for the sake of her husband and children. It is absurd to think that a seer and saint like Kālidāsa could ever stoop down to the narrow-mindedness of holding a grudge against any one, much less against his own wife who, according to his own ideas, is as inseparable from him as his poetry itself.

The Nāṭyaśāstra has ordained that women are the basic sources of happiness and so the dramas should include them in the leading roles. Most of the Sanskrit play-wrights have accepted this ordinance in its narrow sense and the result is the innumerable dramas in Sanskrit with love as their main sentiment. Kālidāsa also has chosen the same theme for his plays. But the difference of these plays from the bulk of the other Sanskrit dramas can be understood only when the significance of each word and action of the various characters is studied carefully. In his works, we have not only the heroine, but all kinds of women. Here we are introduced to something real and yet new; something which no one else has hit upon. This is specially true about the female characters depicted by him, who are all natural, enduring and great in their respective spheres. Though he wrote many centuries ago, these characters have special appeal to people of the present day. His genius worked for humanity as a whole and that is the secret of his appeal to all times and climes.

CHAPTER IV

KALIDASA TO BHAVABHŪTI

The plays of Kalidāsa epitomise the contradiction in the social attitude towards women in India. The two trends of thought, one denouncing them as the root of all evils, and the other trying to uphold their greatness, were running side by side for a long time. And, inspite of the staunch supporters of women like Varāhamihira and Apastamba, women were definitely loosing ground, as could be observed from the later literature. This is specially noticeable in the dramas written after the master-poet.

A number of dramatists are named by the later writers on dramaturgy and the variety and the versatility found in those references are themselves proofs of the fact that there was no stagnation in the literary field at least up to the 10th century A. D. But, unfortunately, most of those dramas are known to posterity only by name. Of the writers whose works have survived, Śrī Harṣa, Viśākhadatta, Bhavabhūti, Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa, Śaktibhadra, Rajaśekhara, Murāri and Diṇṇāga are note-worthy in the arena of Dramatic Literature. Each of these poets presents interestingly different types of plays. They show variety, elasticity and utility to a great extent. But, significantly enough, the information about women that could be collected from these plays is comparatively scanty and, indeed, very disappointing.

We have already noticed that Kalidāsa was sounding a warning to society about the treatment it was meeting out to women, who really desired to be loved and cherished as

goddesses of the hearth and home. He had skilfully showed how the laws laid down with the best of intentions to protect them, were interpreted by those who had vested interests to forge fetters for them. But it seems, those warnings, though appreciated, did not convince the society in general and the condition of women continued to deteriorate.

Women characters who attract the attention of the student first, in this period, are those represented by king Śrī Harṣa, the last great Hindu ruler of Northern India. He is assigned to the first half of the seventh century. Long years had passed since Śakuntalā, Mālavikā, queen Dhārīṇī and Auśīnarī were portrayed. But the circumstances that created Hamsapadikās and Irāvatis seem to have become more and more compelling at the time when Śrī Harṣa wrote. Priyadarśikā, Ratnāvalī and Malayavatī are the heroines of the three plays of this author. The first two themes centre round the amours of the famous king Udayana, while the third describes the self-sacrifice of the Vidyādhara prince, Jīmūtavāhana. The former two plays belong to the type called *nāṭikā* described by Bharata¹ as full of female characters, music, dance and merry-making, and also having the hero, heroine, and the chief queen depicted. Later dramaturgists also have described the *nāṭikā* in greater details.² In both the *nāṭikas* Śrī Harṣa

1. स्त्रीप्राया चतुरङ्गा ललिताभिनयात्मिका सुविहिताङ्गी ।

बहुगीतनृत्यवाचरतिसंभोगात्मिका चैव ॥

राजोपचारयुक्ता प्रसादनक्रोधदंभसंयुक्ता ।

नायकद्वयी चापि देवीसम्बन्धी नाटिका ज्ञेया ॥

N. S. XVIII. 110-111

2. नाटिका क्लृप्तवृत्ता स्यात्स्त्रीप्राया चतुरङ्गिका ।

प्रख्यातो धीरललितस्तत्र स्यान्नायको नृपः ॥

स्यादन्तःपुरसंबद्धा संगीतव्यापृताथवा ।

नवानुरागा कन्यात्र नायिका नृपवंशजा ॥

seems to be following closely the rules laid down by Bharata. This type of plays, not being expected to contribute to either *Dharma* or *Karma*, may have amour as its theme and this limits its scope very much.

Though a great warrior and politician, Śrī Harṣa had a deep interest in literature. Many poets such as Bāṇa, Dhāvaka and others flourished in his court. Apart from encouraging the literary genius dependent on him, he himself was a poet of considerable ability. Of course, there is not much comparison between him and Kālidāsa who influenced him or Bhavabhūti who came after him. There is not much originality found in the plots or development of situations or characters. Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī, remind us of Mālavikā's condition in the court of Agnimitra, though they do not arouse in our minds the same consideration or admiration that is created by the latter. As for Malayavati, the heroine of the Nāgānanda, which is a full-fledged drama, the most that can be said is that she seems to be more a shadow than reality in the whole play.

In the two *natikas* of Śrī Harṣa, we are once more taken to the harem of an amorous king, whose love-intrigues had given enough inspiration to many play-wrights. The very choice of themes and the development of characters show that these belong to a time when the author was more interested in worldly prosperity and enjoyment. History tells us that emperor Śrī Harṣa took to the principles of Buddhism in the later period of his life. It was only natural that the lighter moods prevailed in his younger days and the results were Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī. Between

संप्रवर्तते नेतास्यां देव्यास्त्रासेन शङ्कितः ।
 देवी भवेत्पुनर्ज्येष्ठा प्रगल्भा नृपवंशजा ॥
 पदेपदे मानवती तद्वशः संगमो द्वयोः ।
 वृत्तिः स्यात्कैशिकी स्वल्पविमर्शाः संधयः पुनः ॥

these two *nāṭikās* the theme, characterisation and treatment of the plots go to show the precedence of the *Priyadarśikā* to the *Ratnāvalī*. Even as a literary piece the *Ratnāvalī* is a mature production compared to the other play. The *Nāgānanda*, with tranquility as its predominant sentiment, and non-violence and self-sacrifice as the ideals held up, definitely point towards a period in the poet's life in which he seems to have realised the futility of worldly pleasures, and to have accepted the doctrine of complete self-abnegation for the sake of others to be the most en-nobling and desirable thing in this world. True to conventions, *Malayavati* has been introduced as the heroine and love scenes have been depicted in the first portion of the play. The author himself seems to be not much interested in ordinary things, for he very easily switches on to the depiction of dutifulness to the parents and self-renunciation as the ideals even for youths. A close study of these plays shows the *Nāgānanda* to be the last drama, while the *Priyadarśikā* preceded the *Ratnāvalī*.

As we are introduced to the heroines of the two *nāṭikās* of Śrī Harṣa, we seem to go back to the story of *Mālavikā* who was under the care of the chief queen of Agnimitra. But the similarity ends with the outline of the theme. *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī* are so different from the sister of *Mādhavsena*, even as both of them are different from each other. So also is queen *Vāsavadattā* different from queen *Dhārīṇī*.

The story of *Udayana* had provided former writers, who wrote long before Śrī Harṣa, with themes for dramas. That it was quite popular in those days is proved not only by the words of Śrī Harṣa himself in both his dramas,¹ but also by the references made by earlier writers like Śūdraka² and

1. लोके हारि च वत्सराजचरितं नाट्ये च दक्षा वयम् ।

Ratnāvalī. I. 5 and *Priyadarśikā*. I. 3

2. योगंधरायण इवोदयनस्य राज्ञः ॥

Mrcch. IV. 26

Kālidāsa¹. The *Bṛhatkathā* by Guṇāḍhya or some version of the same must have served as the source-book of the themes centering round Udayana. We are not able to know much about the original work because it has long been lost to posterity. Three abridgements of the same are available now but all of them belong to a very late date and could not have served as source-books to Śrī Harṣa. The only possible conclusion is that Śrī Harṣa took the story from the same sources that served his predecessors.

Though these two plays are very good pieces as literary works, they do not present a very high standard of culture or refinement. In the *Priyadarśikā*, the heroine was intended as the bride of king Udayana, but as luck would have it, she fell into the hands of enemies and was taken as captive to Udayana, who left her in the custody of queen Vāsavadattā. After some time the king saw the girl and became attracted to her, while she also fell in love with him. Though queen Vāsavadattā was deadly against their union in the beginning, she herself ultimately gave the captive in marriage to the king, as she recognised her cousin *Priyadarśanā* in her. The main plot of the *Ratnāvalī* also is more or less the same, the difference being only in the characters of the heroines and the methods in which the union of the lovers was contrived in each case. Queen Vāsavadattā, the chief queen of Udayana and *Kānchanmālā*, her maid-in-attendance, are the female characters common to both the plays while Udayana and his friend Vasantaka are the male ones found in both. All these, except *Kānchanamālā*, are already known to us from the works of Bhāsa. But the king and the queen in the plays of Śrī Harṣa do not have anything in common with those who were introduced to us by the earlier poet. The queen,

1. अ. प्राप्यावन्तीनुदयनकथाकोविदग्रामवृद्धान् ।

Megh. Purva. 32

आ. प्रद्योतस्य प्रियदुहितरं वत्सराजोऽत्र जह्ने ।

Megh. Purva. 35

Vāsavadattā, as portrayed by Bhāsa is a noble, dignified, generous-minded and understanding personage, who could have risen to the height of Queen Dhārīṇī, if the circumstances were the same. But she, as seen in the plays we are studying now, reminds us more of Irāvati in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. The influence of the master-poet over Śrī Harṣa is only too obvious in both these plays, specially in the *Priyadarśikā*. Situations, incidents and even ideas seem to have been freely borrowed from the works of Kālidāsa. For example, Śakuntalā was troubled by the bee while she was watering the plants in the hermitage¹ and that gave king Duṣyanta an opportunity to approach her. Here, in the *Priyadarśikā* also, the bees came out of the lotuses and troubled Aranyakā, which gave an opportunity to Udayana to go to her.² The words of Vasantaka in this play³ seem to repeat the teasing statement of Priyamvadā and Anasūyā.⁴ The similarities in various situations are remarkable between the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. While the dance performance was the means by which *Mālavikā* was presented to the king, the drama within the play provided greater opportunity to *Priyadarśikā* and Udayana. The imprisonment of the new loves of the hero by the chief queen is common to both the *nāṭikās*, as found in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. The theme being almost the same in the *nāṭaka* by Kālidāsa and the *nāṭikās* of Śrī Harṣa, the similarity

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1. शकुन्तलाः—अम्मो! सलिलसेकसंभ्रमोद्गतो नवमालिकामुज्जित्वा वदनं मे मधुरोऽभिवर्तते । Ab. Ś. I. p. 11
 2. आरण्यका—हा धिक् हा धिक् । एते खल्वपरे परित्यज्य कमलिनीं नीलोत्पलवनानि समापतन्तो निपुणतरं बाधमाना आयासयन्ति मां दुष्टमधुराः । Priyadarśikā. II. p. 19
 3. विदूषकः—भवति सकलपृथ्वीपरित्राणसमर्थेन वत्सराजेन परित्रायमाणाय चेटिमिन्दीवरिकां आक्रन्दसि । Priyadarśikā. II. p. 20
 4. उभे—पृथिव्याः यः शरणं स तव समीपे वर्तते । Ab. Ś. II. p. 38

of situations are understandable to a great extent. Still, the evidences are too over-whelming to allow any doubt as to the great influence of Kālidāsa over Śrī Harṣa.

But, these similarities are confined only to the literary and technical side of the plays. Coming down to the characters represented and the society reflected in the later plays, we find ourselves brought to a different atmosphere altogether. The women depicted by Śrī Harṣa seem to have nothing in common with the same characters portrayed by the earlier poet Bhāsa, or with any one presented by Kālidāsa. The inner apartments of Udayana seem to have been reduced to the condition of the women's apartments in the house of any ordinary rich man. The king himself seems to be given to music, wine and women. Once his desire was roused for any new found beauty, nothing could stop him, as testified by Manoramā in the Priyadarśikā.¹ Women seem to have become the objects of sensual pleasure only. King Udayana seems to have had no scruples as to right or wrong conduct, once his desires were aroused. He was more concerned with the fulfilment of his own desires than with the welfare of his subjects, for he appears to be always in search of some new acquisition for his lust. Vasantaka testified to the fact that ever since Āraṇyakā was seen by the king, the latter had been thinking of a way to meet her, forgetting even the duties of the state.² In the Ratnāvalī also we find the king to be enjoying life to the full, leaving the matters of state to the able ministers like Yaugandharāyaṇa, Rumaṇvān and others. *Nāṭika* being the type of play allowing a

1. मनोरमा—(विहस्य) हला अपण्डिते ! कमलिनीबद्धानुरागोऽपि मधुकरो मालतीं प्रेक्ष्याभिनवरसास्वादलम्पटः कुतस्तामनासाद्य स्थितिं करोति ।

Priyadarśikā. III. p. 26

2. विदूषकः—अतिमहान् खलु प्रियवयस्यस्यारण्यकायाः उपर्यनुरागः । येन परित्यक्तराज्यकार्यस्तस्या एव दर्शनोपायं चिन्तयन्नात्मानं विनोदयति ।

Priyadarśikā. III. p. 27

number of women, it is only natural that both these plays of Śrī Harṣa are swamped with women. The story by its very nature relates only to the royal harem and so it is not possible to know much about the life of women in general at the time when Śrī Harṣa wrote. But what little we could gather seems to reflect a deteriorated condition of women.

Priyadarśikā, Ratnāvalī, and Malayavatī are girls of marriageable age. All the three belong to the type of heroines described as *Mugdha*¹ by the dramaturgists. They are young, meek and always frightened, though these conditions do not in any way stop them from following their own hearts' desires. All the three are daughters of noble kings, but they show no particular praise-worthy virtues of their own. It is their beauty, and beauty alone, that is praised every where. The words of Bhishmapitāmaha in the *Pañcarātra*² that women are known by their beauty, while men by their valour, seem to have become deep-rooted in the society by this time. Their beauty and accomplishments in fine arts alone have been brought forward and held up for admiration every where. Priyadarśikā, when presented to Udayana as the daughter of Vindhyaaketu, is sent to the queen with the message that she must be looked after like a sister by her and be given education suitable to a princess, adding further that he should be informed when she becomes eligible for marriage.³ "The word *Varayogyā*, cannot be taken to mean "when she attains marriageable age,"

1. प्रथमावतीर्णयौवनमदनविकारा रतौ वामा ।

कथिता मृदुश्च माने समधिकलज्जावती मुग्धा ॥ S. D. III 58

2. भीष्मः—रूपेण स्त्रियः कथ्यन्ते । पराक्रमेण तु पुरुषाः ।

Pañcarātra. III. p. 40

3. राजा—यशोधरे ! गच्छ । त्वमेव वासवदत्तायाः समर्पय । वक्तव्या च देवी । भगिनीबुद्ध्या त्वयैव सर्वदा द्रष्टव्या । गीतनृत्यवाद्यादिषु विशिष्टकन्यकोचितं सर्वं शिक्षयितव्या । यदा वरयोग्या भविष्यति तदा मां स्मारयेति । Priyadarśikā. I. 10

because it was while she was actually being taken as a bride to Udayana, that her father was defeated. The custom seems to have been to send the bride to the residence of the bride-groom for marriage, as against the way described in the *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa* and the *Svapnavāsavadattā* of Bhāsa, or in the *Tāpasavatsarāja*, where the bride-groom goes to the residence of the bride and brings her with himself. Both *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī* were lost on their way while being taken to be married to Udayana, even as *Mālavikā* got lost on her way while being taken by her brother to Agnimitra. This probably may be an indication of the change of customs from the time of Bhāsa to the period of the later poets. Kālidāsa has described both the methods. In the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, and the *Vikramorvaśīya*, the marriage was by *Gāndharva* rites. But where a marriage properly arranged was to take place, as in the case of *Mālavikā*, we find the elder brother taking his sister to the betrothed king. But in the *Kumārasambhava*, we have the seven sages sent as messengers to the girl's father by the bride-groom to ask for her hand, and the marriage took place at the bride's residence. Both these customs are existent to this day in different parts of India. Though the marriage ceremony always takes place at the bride's residence now-a-days, the preliminaries differ from place to place. As for example, while in the North, it is the girl's party that goes in search of a suitable boy, in Kerala, it is supposed to be disgraceful to the girl's family if any initiative is taken from their side to secure a husband for the girl. This being the case, perhaps there is nothing wrong in concluding that Śrī Harṣa was aware of the custom of taking the girl to the bride-groom at the time he wrote. One thing seems to be definite that, child marriages were not prevalent at least in the royal families, and that the girls were to have accomplishments in fine arts to their credit, so that they should be able to keep up the interest of their husbands in themselves.

Aranyakā was to be instructed in these arts under the supervision of the chief queen. Ratnāvalī was already an expert in the art of painting, as is proved by the fact that she, like Sāgarikā, could paint the picture of Udayana from memory, and her friend Susāṅgatā also could draw the former's portrait with equal skill. Malayavati played beautifully on the lute as testified in the first act of the *Nāgānanda*. According to the testimony of King Udayana, music, dance, playing on instruments and such other fine arts were the necessary constituents of education to be imparted to the girls of noble families.

Priyadarśikā, though head over ears in love with the king, hesitates at every step, even like Mālavikā of Kālidāsa. She is more timid and frightened as a tame deer, when compared to Ratnāvalī, the heroine of the other *nāṭikā*. Priyadarśikā does not lift a finger to attain her desire. If not for Manoramā's courage and Vasantakā's complacency, it is very doubtful whether she would ever have been united with king Udayana. Ratnāvalī presents a bolder type of maiden. She is quite courageous in her love. She dares to portray the king on a picture-board, difficult to hide, though she knows very well the possible consequences of a discovery. Her adventurous spirit is evidenced by her acceptance of the suggestions of Susāṅgatā to disguise herself as the queen and go to the king. While Priyadarśikā takes recourse to poison, Ratnāvalī decides to end her life by hanging herself with the aid of a creeper.

The very interesting factors are the actions and reactions common to the heroines of both the dramas. Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī, both saw the king, and recognised in him the person their respective fathers had wished as their husband. Then they fell in love with him, while the king got infatuated with their beauty not knowing their identity, quite true to his own nature. He went about thinking and working out ways and means to obtain his heart's desire with the help of his friend and the maids-in-

attendance on the queen. But the girls invariably decided to commit suicide to escape an unhappy life. The idea seems to be that if one could not get the man one desired for oneself, then life was not worth living. The words of Kalidāsa, "Death is much better for lovers who have no hopes of union with each other",¹ seem to have been well accepted by the maidens of the day. Malayavatī, the Vidyadhara princess, too, is no exception; for she also tries to put an end to her life. In each case, it is the entrance of the respective hero that saves the life of the heroine.

Though the girls were kept under the protection of their parents, they were not at all in seclusion. Whether maids or mistresses, the unmarried girls were free to move about in gardens and other safely-protected public places in the company of their particular friends. There was no harm in looking at a maiden, as is repeatedly said in all the three plays of Śrī Harṣa.² But, married women were to be avoided scrupulously.³

The maidens other than the princesses, depicted by Śrī Harṣa seem to get intoxicated during the various festivals. They sang and danced during the festival of cupid, the festival of spring, and on many other occasions. The play within the play, in *Priyadarśikā*, is a proof of the fact that women actors were existent in the harems. Here, we are reminded of the dictum of Bharata who said that women in the harems of kings should be taught the art of acting,

1. परसरप्राप्तिनिराशयोर्वरं शरीरनाशोऽपि समानुरागयोः M. A. III. 15

2. अ. राजा—वयस्य निर्दोषदर्शना कन्यका खल्वियम् । विश्रब्धमिदानीं पश्यामः । *Priyadarśikā*. II. p. 18

आ, विदूषकः—भो वयस्य कन्यका खल्वेषा । तत्किं न प्रेक्षावहे ।

नायकः—को दोषः । कन्यका हि निर्दोषदर्शना भवन्ति ।

Nāgānanda. I. p. 18

3. नायकः—(उपसर्पन्सहसा स्थित्वा) वयस्य ! कदाचिद् द्रष्टुमनर्होऽयं स्त्रीजनो भविष्यति *Nāgānanda*. I. p. 18

even as the Apsarās in heaven were trained in this and other allied arts.¹ The practice of the girls on attendance in the harem staging plays in order to please the king and queen and the limited audience that could gather within the safely-guarded inner apartments, seems to be quite common. But here, we get an indication that only women participated in such plays and the roles of men also were acted by themselves as proved by the fact that Manoramā was to play the part of the king in the drama written by Śaṅkrtyāyanī. There seems to be nothing wrong in concluding that maidens enjoyed comparative freedom during the period when Śrī Harṣa wrote.

But, the life of women in general, especially of those who were married, was more fettered and restricted. The companionship and the feeling of oneness between the wife and the husband seems to be dying out in this period which left the woman to be more a "thing of beauty" to be enjoyed by man at his own sweet will and pleasure. Vāsavadattā, the chief queen of Udayana, as presented by Śrī Harṣa, is an example beyond doubt. King Udayana seems to be falling in love with any new beauty he happens to come across. The deep love he professes for his queen is no barrier to him in courting any one of her maids-in-attendance, if the latter attracted his fancy. We have already seen Udayana through the pen of Bhāsa. He was not able to forget his beloved Vāsavadattā, even though he was convinced that she was dead and, forced by circumstances, he had to marry Padmāvatī. In the Tāpasavatsarāja also, where he is the hero, he does not show such a frivolous nature. There again, the reasons that forced him to a second marriage were political and his affections were constantly cen-

1. रम्भोर्वशीप्रभृतिभिः स्वर्गे नाट्यं प्रवर्तते ।

तथैव मानुषे लोके पार्थिवानां गृहेषु च ॥

उपदेष्टव्यमाचार्यैः शास्त्रबुद्ध्याङ्गनास्वपि ।

tered in his first love. But Udayana, portrayed by Śrī Harṣa, scandalously differs from the heroes portrayed by any of the earlier writers. The readiness with which he accepts the suggestions of Manoramā, to act his own role in the play to be presented before the queen, is a proof of his unscrupulous and callous nature. The reason is not far to seek.

Queen Vāsavadattā, in the *nāṭikās* of Śrī Harṣa, depicted in almost the same position as Dhārinī in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, shows a very different phase of woman's character. It is the jealous wife that predominates in her nature. King Agnimitra is not much different from king Udayana, as far as his fickleness in affection is concerned. The difference of the whole atmosphere depends on the queens, the presiding deities of the two harems.

Priyādarśikā was brought to the king as a captive princess and Ratnāvalī was brought to the queen as a girl lost in the sea. Both the situations are more or less similar to that in which *Mālavikā* was brought to the court of Agnimitra, but the difference is also remarkable, which depended much on the treatment of the maidens by the respective queens. *Mālavikā*'s presence in the harem was not known to the king till he saw her picture. Similar was the case with Ratnāvalī, who came to queen Vāsavadattā, as Sāgarikā. Priyādarśikā, as *Āraṇyakā*, was entrusted by the king to the care of the queen. It was by accident that the girls were seen by the respective heroes after they entered the harem. Thus, the outline of the themes is the same, up till the first meeting of the hero and the heroine.

As we have already noticed, Dhārinī knew her husband well enough and always tried to safe-guard him, and thus herself too by keeping the temptations out of his way as far as possible. She was not aware of the noble lineage of *Mālavikā*, sent to her by her brother as a booty of war. Still, she was kind and loving to the girl and was careful to

train her in all the fine arts assuited to a noble-born girl. As a wife, naturally, she could not and would not like to add one more number to the full harem. But, as a good judge of character, she guessed the possibility of the girl's noble birth. She did not hesitate to test the fact when the opportunity arose, as proved by the episode of the *Aśoka Dohada*. The arrangements to marry Mālavikā to the king were complete even before her identity was revealed. And, when the princess was actually recognised, the repentance of the queen about the way she treated the former was quite genuine, as is proved from the words that fell from her mouth spontaneously.¹ Thus, Dhārīṇī always kept herself the mistress of every situation by the authority gained by love and kindness to all, and also by her own dignity and self-respect. But the character of queen Vāsavadattā, as depicted by Śrī Harṣa, is a sad commentary on womanhood as a whole.

This queen does not at all compare favourably with the Vāsavadattā of the Svapnavāsavadattā—that noble woman, who allowed herself to be considered dead, and also accepted the humiliation of being a dependent on the very same princess who replaced her, for the sake of the glory of her husband. The Vāsavadattā of Bhāsa seems to hold up the ideal propagated in the Rāmāyaṇa, namely, the fame of the husband is to be safe-guarded by the wife, because, her everything is the husband.² The same idea was held by Kālidāsa also, though with a little modification.

1. धारिणी—कथम् राजदारिकेयम् चन्दनं खलु मया पादुकोपयोगेन इषितम् ।
M. A. V. p. 247

2. अ. यच्च ते वचनीयं स्यादपवादः समुत्थितः ।

मया च परिहर्तव्यं त्वं हि मे परमा गतिः ॥

V. R. VII. 48. 13-14

आ. राघवस्य यशो हीशेत्त्वया शस्तैस्तु राक्षसैः ।

V. R. V. 37. 55

The wife, indeed, should safeguard the name and fame of her husband, but not by the method of self-abnegation, sacrificing her own self-respect and dignity as a woman. As we have already noticed, Kālidāsa held that if the woman is lost, the man cannot survive. And he proved it by his portrayal of queen Dhārīṇī and also all other female characters.

But, by the time Śrī Harṣa wrote, the woman seems to have come down in the scale to a great extent, having less capacity for pure and selfless love, which characterised the women of earlier days. The best ideals of his time, represented by queen Vāsavadattā, can only be compared to those found in Irāvati, portrayed by Kālidāsa. Queen Vāsavadattā, seen in the two plays of Śrī Harṣa, does love her husband, and is loved and respected by him as she deserved. But she does not seem to possess the dignity and broad-mindedness required by her position as the chief queen and the better-half of a high and mighty king. According to the rules of dramaturgy, she falls under the category of the *Madhyā* type of heroines, described as jealous, proud, easily angered or pleased.¹ Her jealous and unforgiving nature, prejudiced behaviour and frequent nagging bring her down to a very low level. The epithets given to her, such as *Kopānā*, *Caṇḍī* and *Mānini*, by her servants, Vasantaka and the king himself seem to be quite well deserved, when we remember her behaviour at certain critical times. The haste in which she broke up the play, inspite of the pleadings of Sāṅkrṭyāyanī, her anger that resulted in the imprisonment of Aranyakā, Sāgarikā, and even Vasantaka when they were found out, and her general behaviour to the king at such times, all point to the very ordinary level of her character and culture. When she gets the letter from

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2. विदूषकः—एते खलु राजानो दास्याषि एवं नर्त्यन्ते । अहो कार्यस्य गुस्ता । Ibid. III. p. 35
3. सुसंगता—(विहस्य) न केवलं देवः । चित्रफलकेन सह सर्वो वृत्तान्तोऽपि मया विज्ञातः । तद्देव्यै गत्वा निवेदयिष्ये । Ratnāvalī. II. p. 78
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N. S. XXIII. 38

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मया न कार्यं तस्य मदीयेन किं कार्यम् । Priyadarśikā IV. p. 47
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Ibid. III. p. 35
3. सुसंगता—(विहस्य) न केवलं देवः । चित्रफलकेन सह सर्वो वृत्तान्तोऽपि
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ways and means to obtain you.”¹ Udayana behaved properly when he sent the captive princess, brought to him, to his wife and instructed the latter to take care of her and remind him of her when she qualified herself to get married. The duty of the conqueror king should have been to treat the captive according to her status. But, those particular words, taken along with his exclamation when he met and recognised her next, seem to tell a different story. He considered himself cheated out of his rights for a long time². His intentions about the girl do not appear to be any better than those of a lustful man.

A man who is contented with his married life in every way, would not and could not be searching for new acquisitions at all times. This is an elementary factor of a psychological truth. The very fact that Udayana was ever ready to jump at a new arrival, proves his discontented conjugal life. Women being reduced to be mere companions in sensual enjoyment, the degradation of the harem was inevitable. Vāsavadattā, who ought to have been the ruler of Udayana’s heart, as depicted by Bhāsa, was ruling only the full harem of the king, even that through the height of her position and not by her innate noble qualities. Her treatment of the girl entrusted to her care by the king is not at all commendable. We do not see any consideration or love for the girl in the heart of the queen. Āraṇyaka’s own words testify to the treatment meted out to her by the queen.³ She feels her degraded position as a servant in the

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1. मनोरमा—यदि दृष्टा महाराजेन त्वं तदलं संतापितेन । स एवेदानीं दर्शनोपायपर्याकुलो भविष्यति । Priyadarśikā. III. p. 25
 2. राजा—इयं सा विन्ध्यकेतोर्दुहिता । (सानुतापम्) चिरं मुषिताः स्मो वयम् । Priyadarśikā II. p. 18
 3. आरण्यका—(सवाष्पोद्वेगमात्मगतम्) तथा नाम तादृशे वंश उत्पन्नयान्य-जनमाज्ञाप्य स्थितया सांप्रतं परस्य मयाज्ञप्तिः कर्तव्येति नास्ति खलु दुष्करं देवस्य । Priyadarśikā. II. p. 15

queen's retinue. The case of Sāgarikā also is not in any way better. Vāsavadattā is feared by her servants as well as others in the harem. But she does not command the admiration, affection and loyalty enjoyed by either Dhārīṇī or the queens portrayed by Bhāsa. Here, Vāsavadattā is ready to imprison any one who crossed her, even if it be a friend of the king himself. True, Mālavikā also was imprisoned by Dhārīṇī. But it is to be remembered that she did so only to please her co-wife Irāvati, and she took the first opportunity to release her. The confidence of her servants in the benevolent nature of the queen of Agnimitra is proved many times in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. For example, while Mālavikā was caught in the act of yielding to the king a second time by Irāvati and was frightened about the possible consequences, Bakulāvalikā assured her with confidence, "My friend, be calm. The queen is true to her words."¹ Every one in the court of Agnimitra from master to servant, was sure that the queen could never be unjust or unkind. But neither Manoramā, nor Susāngatā, nor even the king was sure of the moods of the Vāsavadattā portrayed in these later plays. Vasantaka, who played a role similar to that of Gautama in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, advised the king to break down the walls of the harem, if he wished to rescue Āraṇyakā.² And the king had to remind him that the queen alone was the authority in such matters. This is not the only instance which points out that the respect commanded by this queen is due only to her position. The unforgiving nature of Vāsavadattā is evidenced in both the plays, even to the very end when the girls were in the clut-

1. बकुलावलिका—समाश्रयितुं प्रियसखी । सत्यप्रतिज्ञा देवी ।

M. A. IV. p. 239

2. विदूषकः—भोः, त्वं तावदनेकसमरसंघट्टप्रभावबाहुशाली, पुनरप्यनेकगज-
तुरगपदातिदुर्विषहृबलसमुदितः । तत्सर्वबलसन्दोहेनान्तः पुरं
सुपीडितं कृत्वेदानीमेवारण्यिकां मोचय ।

Priyadarśikā. IV. p. 42

ches of death. In Priyadarśikā, she actually says to herself that if she did not do something in order to bring Āraṇyākā back to life, people would misunderstand her.¹ In the case of Ratnāvalī also, there is not much difference in the attitude of the queen except this, that, she remembered the captive girls in the harem, the moment she realised about the danger of fire. But she was prepared to bestow their hands on the king only after their identities, as her long-lost cousins, were revealed.

The difference between the portraits of queen Vāsavadattā, drawn by Bhāsa in the earlier period and that drawn by Śrī Harṣa at a later date, is an eye-opener to the change that had come over the society. The adorable queens as visualised by Kālidāsa seem to have disappeared by the time of Śrī Harṣa, leaving only the second class ladies of the harem for the poet to draw his ideals from. The limited educational facilities allowed to the women and their growing seclusion in the inner apartments, seem to have curbed the noble qualities discernable in the earlier women, while weakness, narrow-mindedness and jealousy seem to dominate their nature. The atmosphere of the whole harem seems to have degenerated and no redeeming feature is found any where.

Polygamy which was already existent in the times of Kālidāsa appears to have become the rule of the day. The unhappy results of the same is also obvious to all. For, the parents of Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī are both hesitant to give their daughters in marriage to Udayana, because they were unwilling to give pain to their beloved niece who was already married to Udayana. Yaugandharāyaṇa seems to

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1. वासवदत्ता—अतिदुर्जनः खलु लोकः । कदाचिन्मामन्यथा संभावयिष्यति ।
तदेतदत्र युक्तम् । (प्रकाशं ससंभ्रमम्) मनोरमे लब्धिवहैवानय
ताम् । नागलोकादगृहीतविषविद्य आर्यपुत्रोऽत्र कुशलः ।

Priyadarśikā. IV. P. 54

have been always eager to add to the number of princesses Udayana married. Whenever he heard about a princess who was foretold by some *siddha* that she would become the wife of an emperor, the minister immediately set to work to get her married to Udayana. Love marriages had become more frequent, as could be surmised from the words of Sāṅkṛtyāyanī who says: "Princess, this *Gāndharva* type of marriage is accepted and approved by the "*Dharmaśāstras*. Why feel ashamed of it?"¹ The position of the wives of the kings was as fickle as bubbles, since there was no restriction on Man's freedom to take any woman he liked as his wife. The much emphasized *Dakṣiṇya* existed only in words, as could be seen from the beelike attitude of Udayana.

The veil appears to have come to stay, to cover the married woman. Though maidens could be gazed at by all, it was considered lack of manners, if one looked at a married woman. In the *Nāgānanda*, Jīmūtavāhana decides to look at Malayavatī only after he was assured that she was a maiden. He is not willing to look at her first, because he was doubtful that she may be a woman who should not be looked at. There are occasional references in the same play to show that even women in general had begun to put on veils. When Vidūṣaka, the friend of Jīmūtavāhana, was disturbed by the bees because of the garland he was wearing, he decided to cover himself with the red garments presented to him by Malayavatī. Here he says, "I shall dress like a woman with these red garments and veil myself with this *Uttariya* and go."² The custom of using a veil as a token of noble birth had come into existence long before, as

1. सांकृत्यायनी—राजपुत्रि धर्मशास्त्रविहित एष गान्धर्वो विवाहः । किमत्र लज्जास्थानम् । Priyadarśikā. III. p. 41

2. विदूषकः—अथ वा एतेनैव मलयवत्याः सकाशाल्लब्धेन रक्तांशुकयुगलेन स्त्रीवेष विधायोत्तरीयकृतावगुण्ठनो गमिष्यामि ।

Nāgānanda. III. p. 64

we have noticed in the previous chapters. Women of royal families kept themselves within the harem at the time when Bhāsa wrote. The same idea is expressed by Udayana to Vāsavadattā in the *Ratnāvalī*,¹ as by Bhāsa's Udayana to Padmāvatī in the *Svapnavāsavadattā*. The natural conclusion is that the custom of women of royal families avoiding to appear in public had become common.

The fasts and vows we noticed in the dramas of Kālidāsa seem to have become quite popular among women. According to the *Dharmaśāstrakāras* women were not to perform any religious rites. All that they had to do was to serve their husbands faithfully.² If they must do something, then, that should be without any mantras.³ These fasts and vows performed by women were all meant either to secure a good husband in case of maidens, like Malayavatī, or for the welfare of the husband, in the case of married women, like Queen Vāsavadattā. This attitude seems to be in the ascendance at the time of Śrī Harṣa. King Udayana is described to be in the pangs of separation, seeking relief by visiting shower-houses, gardens and such other places,⁴ because of Vāsavadattā's frequent and long fasts and other religious activities.

The system of *Satī* seems to have come into existence. Vijayasena tells the king that all the wives of Vindhya Ketu

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1. राजा—कांचनमाले उच्यतां देवी । युष्मदीय एवायमैन्द्रजालिकः विजनी-
कृतश्रायमुद्देशः । तदागच्छ । सहितावेव पश्याव इति ।

Ratnāvalī. IV. p. 154

2. नास्ति स्त्रीणां पृथग्यज्ञो न व्रतं नाप्युपोषणम् ।

पतिं शुश्रूषते येन तेन स्वर्गं महीयते ॥

Manu. V. 155

3. अ. अमंत्रिका तु कार्येयं स्त्रीणामावृदशेषतः ।

Manu. II. 66

आ. नास्ति स्त्रीणां क्रिया मन्त्रैरिति धर्मव्यवस्थितिः ।

Manu. II. 18

4. विदूषकः—कथमेष प्रियवयस्योऽद्य देव्या विरहोत्कण्ठाविनोदननिमित्तं
धारागृहोद्यानमेव प्रस्थितः ।

Priyadarśikā. II. p. 11

followed him to the other world by ascending his funeral pyre.¹

Bāṇa, the famous writer who flourished under the patronage of king Śrī Harṣa, refers to this custom in both of his novels.² In the *Harṣacarita* which is a historical novel, the wife of Prabhākara-vardhana is said to have ascended the pyre with him. In the other novel, the *Kādambari*, the same custom is denounced in unequivocal words. These references support our conclusion that the custom of widows ascending the pyre with their husbands was getting hold in the society more and more, though opposition was still existing.

1. विजयसेनः—एवं संबन्धुपरिवारे हते विन्ध्यकेतो, तमनुसृतासु सहधर्म-
चारिणीषु...। Priyadarśikā. I. p. 9

2. अ. अभिनन्दति हि स्नेहकातराऽपि कुलीनता देशकालानुरूपम् । देवी अपि
यशोवती परिष्वज्य समाधाय च तं शिरसि निर्गत्य चरणाम्यामेव च
अन्तःपुरात् पौराक्रन्द निर्भराभिः उपरुध्यमाना इव दिग्भिः सरस्वतोतीरं
ययौ । तत्रच स्त्रीस्वभावकातरैः दृष्टिपातैः प्रविकसितरक्तपङ्कजपुष्पैः इव
अर्चयित्वा भगवन्तं भानुमन्तमिव मूर्तिः ऐन्दवी चित्रभानुं प्राविशत् ।

H. C. V. p. 540-41

आ. यदेतदनुमरणं नाम, तदतिनिष्फलम् । अविद्वज्जनाचरित एष मार्गः ।
मोहविलसितमेतत्, अज्ञानपद्धतिरियम्, रमसाचरितमिदम्, क्षुद्रदृष्टि-
रेषा, अतिप्रमादोऽयम्, मौरख्यंस्खलितमिदम्, यदुपरते पितरि भ्रातरि
सुहृदि भर्तारि वा प्राणाः परित्यज्यन्ते । स्वयं चेन्न जहति न परि-
त्याज्याः । अत्र हि विचार्यमाणे स्वार्थे एव प्राणपरित्यागो यमसह्य
शोकवेदना प्रतीकारत्वादात्मनः । उपरतस्य तु न कमपि गुणमावहति ।
न तावत्तस्यायं प्रत्युज्जीवनोपायः, न धर्मोपचयकारणम्, न शुभलोको-
पार्जनहेतुः, न निरयपात प्रतीकारः, न दर्शनोपायः, न परस्परसमागम-
निमित्तम् । अन्यामेव स्वकर्मफलपाकोपचितामसाववशो नीयते भूमिम्
असावप्यात्मघातिनः केवलमेनसा संयुज्यते । जीवन्तु जलाञ्जलिदा-
नादिना बहूपकरोत्युपरतस्यात्मनश्च, मृतस्तुनोभयस्यापि ।

Kā. Part. I. 318-19

But burning oneself to death was not sanctioned by Manu. According to the earlier lawgivers, the widows were to live a life of celibacy or take to ascetic life.¹ In the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, we have already noticed the unique character, *Parivrājikā*. Here in the *Priyadarśikā*, there is *Sāṅkṛtyāyanī* who is also a nun. Like the *Parivrājikā*, this lady also is well-versed in the *śāstras* and literature. It was she who dramatized the marriage of *Vāsavadattā* and *Udayana*, to be enacted in the auditorium of the palace.² But, one thing is significant here; though a well-wisher of the king and queen, she does not like to interfere in the palace intrigues directly or indirectly. She tries her best to smoothen the relations between the king and the queen, which often got complicated by the unscrupulousness of the king and the jealous and impatient nature of the queen. But, she retired with dignity from such situations which did not suit her position as one dedicated to religious life. The way in which she left the audience-chamber, saying, "It is not proper for me to stay here anymore,"³ when it was detected by the queen that the king himself was acting the role which *Manoramā* should have acted according to schedule, is an

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1. कामं तु क्षपयेद्देहं पुष्पमूलफलैः शुभैः ।
 न तु नामापि गृह्णीयात्पत्यौ प्रेते परस्य तु ॥
 आसीतामरात्क्षान्ता नियता ब्रह्मचारिणी ।
 यो धर्मं एकपत्नीनां काङ्क्षन्ती तमनुत्तमम् ॥
 मृते भर्तारि साध्वी स्त्री ब्रह्मचर्ये व्यवस्थिता ।
 स्वर्गं गच्छत्यपुत्रापि यथा ते ब्रह्मचारिणः ॥

Manu. V. 157-160

2. मनोरमा—यः स साङ्कृत्यायन्यार्यपुत्रस्य मम च वृत्तान्तो नाटकोपनि-
 बद्धस्तस्य नतितव्यशेषमद्य युष्मामिः कौमुदीमहोत्सवे नतित-
 व्यमिति ।
 Priyadarśikā. II. p. 23
3. साङ्कृत्यायनी—कथमन्यदेवेदं प्रेक्षणीयकम् संवृत्तम् । अभूमिरियमस्मद्धि-
 धानाम् ।
 Priyadarśikā. III. p. 43

example to the point. The characterization of this lady is in keeping with the fact that Śrī Harṣa was a staunch follower of Buddhism, which allowed women to accept the ascetic garb and work for the betterment of the world, even as men.

There is evidence enough in these plays to show that Śrī Harṣa's rule was a period of tolerance for both Hinduism and Buddhism. This co-existence of both the religions is most obvious in the *Nāgānanda*. This play seems to be more of didactic importance as far as can be judged from the theme. As it was mainly meant to hold up the ideal of benevolence, and self-sacrifice, there is not much scope for women characters, who were considered at that time as helpers only in enjoying worldly pleasures. The ordinance of Manu which denounced woman as a door to hell, and attributed to her various other evil qualities, came to be taken as gospel truth by people in general; and, perhaps, the mutual distrust of man and woman becoming a vicious circle, paved the way for further deterioration in the conditions of both.

Malayavatī, though introduced as the heroine in the *Nāgānanda*, appears to be a complete misfit in the play. The atmosphere of the play is rather high and philosophical to allow frivolous love affairs in it. But, some how, the poet did try to connect the love of Malayavatī and Jīmūtavāhana with the self-sacrifice and benevolence of the latter. So, it is only natural that the heroine fades into a mere shadow in the background. The conventional situations of a love story are not lacking in the *Nāgānanda*, in so far as the hero and the heroine are depicted in their lovesick conditions and the desperate love of the latter is shown by her trying to commit suicide as the heroines of the other two plays. On the whole, Malayavatī does not show much individuality. She seems to be a creation of the poet to illustrate the ideal wife and daughter-in-law that would satisfy the contemporary

society. Everywhere she seems to be repeating the words and actions of her parents-in-law, particularly so in the last act. Malayavatī and her mother-in-law are the two female characters who are noteworthy in this play. But the only peculiarity noticeable about them is that, they are just two non-entities who did not have any existence apart from their respective husbands. Malayavatī's one desire is to get a suitable husband, for the fulfillment of which she worships the goddess Gourī. Once she is married, her life merges into that of her husband and, for all practical purposes, she lives when he lives and dies when he dies. In this play Śrī Harṣa seems to be holding up the ideals of the two religions which he supported equally: the ideal of self-sacrifice held up by Buddhism for the man, and the complete self-abnegation and devotion to the husband, propagated by Hinduism for the woman. Also, the goddess Gourī, the divine bird Garuḍa, and the Bodhisattva are all brought on the stage as and when required, thus, perhaps showing the happy blending of the good things in both the religions. As a didactic play, the Nāgānanda may be very interesting and valuable, but the picture of the women one visualises in it is rather disappointing and discouraging.

All the three plays of Śrī Harṣa, though good, as far as they go by way of literary pieces, show a very unexhilarating condition of women in general, even though only the royal families are depicted.

The Mudrārākṣasa, a drama with a full-fledged political theme and, consequently, with no woman character in the leading role, claims our attention next. The author of this drama is Viśākhadatta who is said to have written another drama also, called Devī-Candragupta, which is not available in full. His reference to bad poets, who do not keep unity of action in their dramas,¹ and also to the difficulty of com-

1. समिद्धार्थकः—तत्किंनिमित्तं कुकविकृतं नाटकस्येवान्यन्युल्लेख्यनिर्वहणे ।

posing a good drama,¹ go to show that he was well-versed in the *Sāhitya Śāstra* or the Science of Literature, specially the branch of dramaturgy.

This drama is exclusively devoted to the political happenings during the dethronement of king Nanda by Cāṇakya to place his beloved disciple, Candragupta, on the throne. In many respects, this play is unique among the Sanskrit dramas, mainly due to the absence of leading female characters. The peculiar theme, and the variety and peculiarity of the characters represented are also noteworthy. There are kings and ministers, aristocrats and ascetics, warriors and assassins, spies and secret agents. The female characters known to us in this play are the two door-keepers Sonottarā and Vijayā, and the wife of Candanadāsa, who appear on the stage, while the *Viṣakanyā* and the wife of Amātya Rākṣasa are referred to in the development of the plot.

These references, scanty as they are, indicate that according to this writer at least, women had ceased to be of much importance except as sources of enjoyment to their husbands at the time of prosperity, and of troubles in times of difficulties. When serious thoughts and decisions were needed, it was thought better to keep them away from the scene of action. The wife of Amātya Rākṣasa is referred to as *Gṛhajana*, the person to be at home. The women seem to be becoming more and more confirmed as possessions of men who considered them to be useless and insignificant. Enumerating the various kinds of helpers to

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1. राक्षसः—कार्योपक्षेपमादौ तनुमपि रचयंस्तस्य विस्तारमिच्छन्वीजानां गभितानां फलमतिगहनं गूढमुद्भेदयंश्च ।
कुर्वन्बुद्ध्या विमर्शं प्रसूतमपि पुनः संहस्रकार्यजातं
कर्त्ता वा नाटकानामिममनुभवति क्लेशमस्मद्विघ्नो वा ॥

the king, Cāṇakya says: "They alone, who possess all the three qualities—wisdom, valour and loyalty, may be considered as real servants of the king either in weal or woe. The others are merely wives."¹ One thing seems to be definite; whatever be the general conditions, the author of this play did not have a very high opinion about women as a whole.

Sanskrit dramas in general have depicted only women belonging to royal or aristocratic families. And so, we are not able to gather much information as to the common women belonging to the lower middle class or those who are still lower in society. In this drama, even as in the earlier ones women door-keepers are seen. This indicates the custom of employing women for such services in the courts to be still continuing. Perhaps, women in the lower strata of society had freedom to earn their living, and they took up services according to their capacity as in the older days. The ruling of Manu that a woman should confine herself to the duties of bearing and bringing up children, and also that of looking after the house in obedience to her husband,² perhaps applied only to the women of the upper middle-class families, and families of noble and royal descent. But we have no definite evidences in this play to say anything with certainty.

The condition of woman was slowly but surely deteriorating, as we have seen from the two authors who have been studied after Kālidāsa. Now comes Bhavabhūti, the one dramatist who can be compared with the master-poet,

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1. प्रज्ञाविक्रमभक्तयः समुदिता येषां गुणा भूतये ।

ते मृत्या नृपतेः कलत्रमितरे संपत्सु चापत्सु च ॥

Mu. Rā. I. 15

2. अ. उत्पादनमपत्यस्य जातस्य परिपालनम् ।

प्रत्यहं लोकयात्रायाः प्रत्यक्षं स्त्रीनिबन्धनम् ॥

Manu. IX. 27

- आ. सदा प्रहृष्टया भाव्यं गृहकार्येषु दक्षया ।

सुसंस्कृतोपस्करया व्यये चामुक्तहस्तया ॥

Manu. V. 150

even remotely. He draws our attention towards the story of Sītā once more, with the changes he thought fit to make, perhaps to suit the taste of the society he faced. Three plays are handed down to posterity by this author, two of which are based on the Rāmāyaṇa and one on a theme of his own imagination. Critics are more or less agreed about the relative chronology of these three plays. The *Mahāvīracarita*, depicting the story of Rāma up to the final coronation at Ayodhyā, gives the impression of being the first attempt of the poet. The *Mālatī-Mādhava*, a *Prakarṇa*, is generally accepted as the second, while the excellence of Bhavabhūti's genius reached its heights in the *Uttararāmacarita*, where Sītā, the venerable ideal of Indian womanhood, is brought to the limelight once more, though in a much different form.

A critical study of the women characters presented by Bhavabhūti, forces the student to pause a little and consider their position in society as the poet saw and understood. For, here is another writer, who wishes to give enjoyment and instruction combined, and to fulfil the true aims of literature through his works. He records what he saw, without thinking much about the immediate reactions of his audience; at the same time trying to tell them what the ideal should be. Whether the contemporary society took the lesson or not, is uncertain; but, the posterity has many things to learn from those outbreaks of the poet's soft and emotional heart.

Learned scholars have, after due consideration, fixed his date to be the first quarter of the eighth century A.D.

In the *Mahāvīracarita*, which is obviously his first attempt, Bhavabhūti aims at depicting the heroic sentiment with Rāma as the great hero—the *Mahāvīra*. According to the traditional conception prevailing in society, women did not count much. And so, perhaps the poet does not care to depict Sītā at par with the Hero, Rāma. But this conclusion cannot hold water, when we remember that even in this drama, where heroic sentiment predominates, there are

a few women characters, who can do honour to any society they might belong to. Hence, the difference we find in the *Sītā* of *Mahāvīracarita*, from the same character of the source book itself, will have to be accounted for in some other way.

At the outset itself, we find a peculiarity in this drama of *Bhavabhūti*, which we do not find any where else before his time, throughout the Sanskrit literature. There are two sets of female characters, completely differing from each other in various ways, presented here. One set belongs to the Āryan household, as it were, represented by *Sītā*, *Urmilā* and the queen mothers, while the other belongs to the South, beyond the *Vindhya* forests, represented by *Śurpaṇakhā*, *Trijaṭā*, *Māṇḍodri*, *Śramaṇā*, *Laṅkā* and *Alakā*. While the women of the first group seem to be mild, modest, submissive and devoid of any individuality of their own, those of the other group become conspicuous by their rare qualities such as courage, shrewd understanding in political matters, energy and active brains.

Though the *Rāmāyaṇa* has served as the source for many brilliant pieces of literature, nowhere is seen a *Sītā*, similar to the one depicted in the *Mahāvīracarita*. The freedom-loving genius of *Bhavabhūti* has made many drastic changes in the body-plot of the story he had adopted for his first play. He took the liberty of changing not only the course of the story, but he has changed even, the main characters like *Sītā*, *Urmilā* and *Śurpaṇakhā*. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in the plays of *Bhāsa*, in the *Raghuvamśa* of *Kālidāsa*, everywhere, *Rāma* has his noble counterpart *Sītā* by his side, at par with him. But, it is very difficult for any student of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to recognise the weeping and trembling girl who appears in the *Mahāvīracarita*, trying to hold back her husband from going to the battle-field. She seems to be more an obstacle than help to her husband in his performance of duties. When *Bhārgava* challenges

Rāma for a fight, Sītā tries her best to hold him back, and her friends and attendants only encourage her in doing so. When she sees that Rāma would not stay back at her request she does not hesitate to hold on to the bow and try to stop him, though in vain. This behaviour of hers may befit a common uncultured girl belonging to the medieval period, but it was not at all suitable to the daughter of the great king Janaka, or to the daughter-in-law of the famous king Daśaratha of the Solar dynasty. Sītā does not appear often on the stage, but the little we see of her, is enough to convince us as to the correctness of the above conclusion. The way in which Sītā and Urmilā are hustled back into the harem, when the battle between Rāma and Bhārgava seemed to be inevitable, is a proof to the point. It seems that the men looked upon their women as obstacles to be got out of the way when any serious matter was on hand, and considered them such weaklings as to be worthy of being kept in safe custody, within the harem, whenever danger threatened. They seem to be considered as clinging creepers, of course to be loved and cherished, but a source of endless trouble and worry at the time of distress.

But, the women of Dakṣiṇāpatha seem to live a different life altogether. They are free to go about, are well-educated, and have access to the political and administrative spheres also. Śurpaṅakhā, the leading character of this group is quite a contrast to the same character in the Rāmāyaṇa. She seems to occupy an important position in Rāvaṇa's court. Mālyavān, the uncle and clever minister of the great emperor of Laṅkā, readily takes Śurpaṅakhā into his confidence. When she enters his presence, he offers her a seat. She is the emperor's sister and the minister's niece, yet, instead of confining herself within the four-walls of the harem like her sisters of the North, she goes about, entrusted with important missions, even into the enemy camp itself. She is called upon by the minister and the emperor to offer

advice in important matters of State. Mālyavān had full faith in her intelligence and discretion. He says, "You are particularly loved by your brother, Rāvaṇa, my child, and you are wise also. So, I am telling you my troubles with an open heart."¹ She seems to act as an espionage-agent bringing news from far and wide and going on missions as an ambassador or a skilful courtier. She is also shrewd enough to observe the moods of Rāvaṇa. Though every body knows that the King's desire for Sītā is going to bring trouble on all of them, it is only Śūrpaṇakhā who foresees that Rāvaṇa would not be stopped at any cost.² Mālyavān asks her to go and instigate Bhārgava against Rāma. She warns him that if the plan miscarries it will be doubly dangerous.³ Another time, Śūrpaṇakhā is sent to manage the exile of Rāma. There again, she gives proof of her sound practical sense and counsels that it is not a good policy to bring near the enemy who is far away, or to create hatred where there is none for the sake of a woman.⁴ When Mālyavān insists and further explains his plans she tells him plainly, "If Rāma kills Bālī also, even as he conquered Paraśurāma, then the unavoidable friendship between Vibhīṣaṇa and Rāma will prove to be a great danger to us."⁵ The

1. माल्यवान्—रावणप्रियासि वत्से कार्यज्ञा च अतो निःशङ्कमावेद्यते
हृदयस्त्रेदः । M. C. IV. p. 90
2. शूर्पणखा—यदा दशमुखः ईषन्मुकुलितैर्विशतिदृष्टिभिः निद्रायमाणलोल-
लोचनो नमद्वदनो वर्तते तथा जानामि दारुणो अस्य हृदय-
वेदनावेगो नैवं विरंस्यतीति । M. C. II. p. 38
3. शूर्पणखा—पक्षान्तरे महादोषः । M. C. II. p. 43
4. शूर्पणखा—मम द्वयमेव एतत् न युक्तम् प्रतिभाति । यच्च दूरस्थितस्य
दारारथेनः सन्निधानकरणं यच्चानाबद्धवैरस्य अप्रतिसमाधेयं
स्त्रीवैरमिति । M. C. IV. p. 88
5. शूर्पणखा—अथ रामो परशुरामविजयजनितविरोधिनं बालिनं व्यापदयति
ततो विभीषण-रामसंयोगो अनर्थ इति संभावयामि ।
M. C. IV. p. 93

optimistic minister tries to convince her, and she starts on her mission, as she finds her warning to be of no avail. Her exclamation : "O mother, even you have to face this calamity"¹ shows only too well that she is sure of the coming catastrophe. The fact that she was more wise and shrewd is proved by the final results. The Rāmāyaṇa portrays this sister of Rāvaṇa as an amorous and shameless woman who, attracted by Rāma's charms, tried to win him for herself by any means, fair or foul. Bhavabhūti's Śūrpaṇakhā is a marvellous contrast. She is the friend, philosopher and guide of the great minister of Laṅkā. She is sent to enemy camps to create discord and confusion. She goes fearlessly into battle-fields and the turmoil causes her no fright.

The ascetic woman, Śramaṇā, is a character who goes about on political missions. She carries Vibhīṣaṇa's message to Rāma, informs him about Sugrīva and Bālī, and also conducts Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to R̥ṣyamūka. Alakā, the presiding deity of the city of Kubera, is another messenger of no mean importance. The portrayal of the whole group, led by Śūrpaṇakhā is quite unique and unprecedented in Sanskrit literature. Bhavabhūti was the first dramatist who dared to show this aspect of these women. This may mean that he had witnessed in the Dravidian society of *Dakṣiṇāpatha* such embellishing and ennobling conditions of women and he wished to bring them to the notice of the people who tried to suppress and denounce women. He claims his homeland to be *Dakṣiṇāpatha*. The description of women, belonging to that area, reveals his familiarity with a totally different, though highly developed culture well in contrast with Āryan traditions, ideals and customs. The women of *Dakṣiṇāpatha* in this play show more life and spirit while their Āryan sisters make a poor show by comparison. The poet's job is to depict situations and delineate characters in order to combine instruction with enjoyment

1. हा, अम्बे ! त्वया अपि दुःखं प्रेक्षितव्यम् । M. V. Ch. IV. p. 88

for the good of the people, and Bhavabhūti, by offering this clear contrast, perhaps, wished to warn his readers to pause and think whither they were bound.

We have already noticed that the Śurpaṇakhā episode was left out by Bhāsa in his plays and by Kālidāsa in his poem. Bhavabhūti also is completely silent about the unabashed wooing of the Āryan prince Rāma by the unscrupulously bold *Rākṣasa* Princess, as described in the Rāmāyaṇa. It is now an accepted fact that the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata took a long time to evolve into the forms in which we have them today. There is ample evidence of innumerable interpolations in both. So, it is quite possible that this portion of the story was the outcome of some one's fertile imagination, which revealed in attributing all kinds of vices to the non-Āryan enemies, who showed a tough front to the Āryans for a long time. The first play that depicts Śurpaṇakhā in the same colours as the Rāmāyaṇa, is the Āścarya Cūḍāmaṇi of Śaktibhadra.

However that may be, this ennobling characterisation of the women beyond the Vindhya mountains, does not seem to have had any encouragement from the Sanskrit knowing public of the day. Bhavabhūti's declaration of despair, pronounced in one of the verses of his second play, shows that his first attempt did not get the welcome he expected. It was with great confidence that he introduced his first play to the learned public. Following the method of Śrī Harṣa¹ he had also said that the poet is blessed with a command of the language, the story is that of Rāma, and the audience is full of people who are experts in literature,

1. श्रीहर्षो निपुणः कविः परिषदप्येषा गुणग्राहिणी

लोके हारि च वत्सराजचरितं नाट्ये च दक्षा वयम् ।

वस्त्वैकैकमपीह वाञ्छितफलप्राप्तेः पदं किं पुन-

मंद्भाग्योपचयादयं समुदितः सर्वो गुणानां गणः ॥

Ratnāvalī. I. 5

implying thereby his confidence in the success of the play.¹ But in his second play he announces that his attempt was not for those who scoffed at him, for they were fools. His consolation is in the possibility of a future generation who may be able to understand him and his ideas, because the time is eternal and the world is wide.² Perhaps, we need not search far for the reason why, the public did not like this play of Bhavabhūti. The drastic changes he made in the main story, without any improvement on the various characters, and the depiction of the female characters as described above, might have prejudiced the Āryan public who witnessed the play, to such an extent that they could not and would not appreciate the genius of the poet and the courage of his convictions. Perhaps, this sad experience made him so disgusted with all known stories, that he decided to create a new theme for his next play, full of female characters all belonging to the upper middle class with no special individuality of their own. If people want to visualise only the ordinary love and cannot appreciate the nobler things in life irrespective of races and creeds, then let them have it with a vengeance, the poet seems to say in this second play.

Mālatī, the young daughter of the Brāhmin minister Bhūriyasu is the heroine of the Mālatīmādhava. This belongs to the type called prakaraṇa, and seems to propagate free love. The mutual love of Mālatī and Mādhava resulting in their marriage by the help of the Buddhist nun Kāmandakī and her disciples, is the main plot. The love of Makaranda

1. वश्यवाचः कवेः काव्यं सा च रामाश्रया कथा ।

लब्धश्च वाक्यनिष्पन्दनिष्पेक्षनिकषो जनः ॥ M. V. Ch. I. 4

2. ये नाम केचिदिह नः प्रथयन्त्यवज्ञां
जानान्ति ते किमपि तान्प्रति नैष यत्नः ।
उत्पस्यते मम तु कोऽपि समानधर्मा
कालो ह्ययं निरवधिर्विपुला च पृथ्वी ॥

M. M. I. p. 13

and Madayantikā runs as the sub-plot. It is the bombastic flowery language in this play and also the numerous female characters that mainly attract one. They are all, more or less, the common types ordained by the dramaturgists, who seem to recur in all the later Sanskrit dramas one way or the other. This play particularly seems to be over crowded with women, though none of them show much of idealism, or any individuality of their own.

Mālatī and Madayantikā are young girls of marriageable age. They belong to the family of ministers. Their education seems to be limited to fine arts such as painting, singing and making of garlands. There seems to be nothing wrong in accepting them as models of maidens belonging to the aristocratic families of the contemporary society. Mālatī seems to be an image carved by the poetic imagination to suit all the requirements of the cultured society in which the poet lived. She is a very obedient daughter who would not even dream of going against the wishes of her parents. Neither Mālatī nor Madayantikā would talk to their lovers directly, but only through the medium of their friends. Of course, this characteristic of nobly born girls is noticed in the plays of Śrī Harṣa also, where all the three heroines talked only to their friends, and made them their respective media. Even to their friends, they would talk in very low tones, so that none else could hear them.

Kāmandakī, the old Buddhist nun, along with her disciples, Avalokitā, Buddharakṣitā, and Soudāminī seems to make the union of Mālatī and Mādhava the end and aim of her existence. Though she is introduced as an ascetic woman and is addressed as "Bhagavatī", her role is more of a match-maker. Besides, she induces her disciples also to act in the same way. She persuades Mālatī to go against the wishes of her father and marry Mādhava. She quotes the examples of Śakuntalā, Urvāśī, and Vāsavadattā, who followed the dictates of their hearts, though carefully adding the comment that such daring deeds should not be suggested

to young girls, because they are very risky.¹

There is not much to say about the various female characters, for, all of them are working to achieve the one end—the union of the hero and the heroine. The one laudable idea emphasised again and again by Bhavabhūti in all his three plays is the ideal of true love. This is expounded by Kāmandakī to the newly-wed couple in the *Mālatī-Mādhava*, thus: “Dearest friends and relatives ! all desires, riches and life itself is the husband, as far as the woman is concerned. So also is the wife for the man. May this be remembered by my beloved children.”² Apart from this there seems to be nothing new or fresh in this play.

A close study of the plays of Bhavabhūti shows that the poet is very conventional as far as his art is concerned. In the first two plays, he seems to have tried to represent the contemporary society as far as the position of women is concerned. In both, we meet with the normal and ordinary happenings of a deteriorating society, clothed, no doubt, in highflown language. The condition of women as could be read between the lines in these plays is not very elevating or encouraging. Even as *Mālatī* and *Madayantikā*, *Sītā* and *Urmilā* also are young girls of marriageable age. But there is no special indication as to the type of education received by these girls. Though belonging to royal families, they seem to be in no way superior to the ordinary type of girls

1. कामन्दकी—अयि सरले ! किमत्र भगवत्या शक्यम् । प्रभवति प्रायः
कुमारीणां जनयिता देवं च । यच्च किल कौशिकी शकुन्तला
दुष्यन्तमप्सराः पुहरवसं चकम उर्वशीत्याख्यानविद आचक्षते,
वासवदत्ता च पित्रा संजयाय राज्ञे दत्तमात्मानमुदयनाय
प्रायच्छदित्यादि, तदपि साहसकल्पमित्यनुपदष्टव्यमेव ।

M. M. II. p. 122

2. कामन्दकी—प्रेयो मित्रं ! बन्धुता वा समग्रा सर्वे कामाः शेषधिर्जीवितं वा ।
स्त्रीणां भर्ता, धर्मदाराश्च पुंसामित्यन्योन्यं वत्सयोर्जातिमस्तु ॥

M. M. III. 18

seen around even today. Though hailing from the noble and heroic dynasty of the Videhas, the princesses tremble at the very name, battle. Another peculiarity noticeable is the rule of the elders in the family and of the Brāhmins in the society. Sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, all bow before the decisions and orders of their elders in the family. Women seem to be the greatest sufferers in this respect. The girls dare not go against the wishes of their parents as has been already noticed in the *Mālatī-Mādhava*. Marriages are arranged by the parents, and the girls have no voice in the matter. When the king asks the hand of *Mālatī* for his favourite minister *Nanda*, *Bhūriवासु* answered in all humility "Your Majesty has full authority over your own girls."¹ And, the marriage is as good as accomplished.

Still all women do not seem to be denied the facilities of higher education. *Kāmandakī*, *Soudāminī*, *Avalokitā* and also *Ātreya* in the *Uttara-Rāmacharita* are examples of this fact. *Ātreya* tells *Vāsantī*, about the obstacle in her continuing the studies at the feet of *Vālmiki*, and her consequent decision to go to *Agastyāśrama* for the same purpose. This shows that women had the liberty of taking to higher studies and also of going to the preceptor's house to accomplish this aim. Perhaps, only those, who wanted to lead a life of celibacy were allowed this liberty. And the girls belonging to the aristocratic families were more or less compelled to lead a family life.

Once married, it became the duty of the girl to obey her husband and the elders of his family. Thereafter, she may have no individual opinions nor a separate existence, as it were. No mention of widow-marriage or "Sati" is found in these plays. But the veil seems to be prevalent at least as a sign of respect towards the elders. In the *Mahāvīracarita* *Rāma* asks *Sītā* to put on the veil at the approach of

1. द्वितीया—प्रभवति निजस्य कन्यकाजनस्य महाराज इति ।

Bhārgava, because he is an elder to be revered.¹ The killing of women was indeed considered sinful. But, the order of Brāhmaṇas and sages was powerful enough to make even a sinful deed a duty, because of their divine knowledge. Rāma declares this when he is ordered by Viśvāmitra to kill Tāḍakā.²

Thus, the society, depicted by Bhavabhūti, does not seem to have offered any better position to its women, than what they were enjoying at the time of Śrī Harṣa or Viśākhadatta. He, as a real poet who saw and understood things in their correct light, was hurt at the plight in which he found the sweet and soft flowers of the nation. As in the case of the first poet, Vālmiki, whose sorrow—'Śoka'—manifested itself in the form of 'Śloka', that which is laudable, as described by Kālidāsa,³ so also in the case of Bhavabhūti, the suffering of his soul visualised something new. The supremacy of man over woman, and that of religion over man, seem to have stung the poet to the quick, and his emotional nature rose in revolt. The story of the Rāmāyaṇa and its idealistic value had already attracted him, though he had to accept defeat when he tried to bring it down to the level of the society in which he was living. But, the experience of life he gained by the time, perhaps awoke him to the greatness of the ideal of Indian womanhood, as seen in Sītā, and also he was reminded of the injustice that even such a woman had to suffer. He rose to higher levels of imagination and set up to redraw the picture of Sītā and Rāma, as the ideal he saw, namely, the

1. रामः—प्रिये ! गुरुरयं । तदपसृत्य कृतावगुण्ठना भव ।

M. V. Ch. II. p. 52

2. रामः—एवम् । भवन्तो जानन्ति ।

सर्वदोषानभिष्वङ्गादाम्नायमसतां गतः ।

युष्माकमभ्युपगमः प्रमाणं पुण्यपापयोः ॥ M. V. Ch. I. 38

3. निषादविद्धाण्डजदर्शनोत्थः श्लोकत्वमापद्यत यस्य शोकः । R. V. XIV. 70

identical life of husband and wife. The result was his masterpiece, the Uttara-Rāmacharita. He had caught the significance of the simile used by Kālidāsa in the first verse of Raghuvamśa, where the mother and father of the universe are compared to the word and its meaning. The word and the woman are similar in their meaningfulness and beauty. In the same way, it is also possible to misinterpret the words and misunderstand the nature, habits, and character of women, due to their patient, timid and forbearing nature. Bhavabhūti has had ample experience as to the criticising nature of people as far as words were concerned. The story of Sītā gave evidence to the truth being applicable to woman also. It is this conviction brought home to him by experience as well as precept that he expressed in the introduction of this play.¹

The value of literature does not lie so much in rhetorical finish and literary flourish as in the human appeal it makes and the interpretation of life it offers. In the Uttara-Rāmacharita, we see more humanised characters than in his other plays. They live, move and breathe in an atmosphere of deep emotions, and speak the language of the heart. His idea of conjugal life is immortalised in the words of Rāma,² in the first act itself. Married life can retain the first thrill of love when the couple knows the perfect language of the heart, and thus have complete faith in the constancy of each other's love. It is this meaning of

1. सूत्रधारः—सर्वथा व्यवहर्तव्यं कुतो ह्यवचनीयता ।

यथा स्त्रीणां तथा वाचां साधुत्वे दुर्जनो जनः ॥

U. R. Ch. I. 5

2. रामः—अद्वैतं सुखदुःखयोरनुगतं सर्वास्ववस्थासु य-

द्विश्रामो हृदयस्य यत्र जरसा यस्मिन्नहार्यो रसः ।

कालेनावरणात्ययात्परिणते यत्स्नेहसारे स्थितं

भद्रं तस्य सुमानुषस्य कथमप्येकं हि तत्प्राप्यते ॥

U. R. Ch. I. 39

love and life, that is emphasised in this play. To achieve this end, the poet took the bold step of bringing about the reunion of Sītā and Rāma—an idea which was beyond the imagination of any one till that time.

The influence of the first poet Vālmiki and the master-poet Kālidāsa over Bhavabhūti cannot be over-estimated in any way. Even in his earlier plays we have examples enough to prove this. In this last attempt of his, the new benedictory stanza is evidence in full to his adoration of his predecessors. Here, he bows down to those venerable predecessors and also to the divine speech which is the embodiment and, hence, part and parcel of the eternal spirit.¹ Thus bowing down to the great Preceptors of old, and accepting his indebtedness to them, he undertakes the noble task of relating the last phase of the story of Sītā and Rāma as he understood it.

Vālmiki and Kālidāsa both agreed as to the last vow of Sītā which forced Mother Earth to take her away from this un-understanding world. But, the very ideal that Bhavabhūti propagated would fall to pieces if Rāma and Sītā were not reunited. Hence, he exploited his poetic licence to the full, beginning the play with the issue of separation, and developing it into a natural and inevitable reunion. The various incidents are only cleverly constructed steps to that final goal.

The banishment of the innocent and trusting queen, is a jarring note in the ideal character of the hero Rāma. It was not at all consistent with the divine love of Rāma and Sītā as eulogised by the poets of all times. Kālidāsa had already pointed this out to the world through the words of Vālmiki, who seems to be denouncing him for this

1. इदं कविभ्यः पूर्वमेवो नमोवाकं प्रशस्महे ।

वन्देमहि च तां वाचममृतामात्मनः कलाम् ॥

U. R. Ch. I. 1

apparent lapse.¹

According to the ordinary conception, by abandoning Sītā, Rāma failed in his duty towards her as her husband as well as the king. But, according to the ideal accepted by Bhavabhūti, Sītā and Rāma being one in soul, though different in bodies, the above conception of right and wrong cannot hold water, even for a moment. Bhavabhūti's attempt in this play, is to expound this idealistic oneness of the couple as he understood it, even in that forced exile of Sītā. Rāma, the king, had to please his people by all his actions, and Sītā, his better-half, was bound by duty to share all his responsibilities. This idea is actually pointed out by Sītā in the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa also, when she says, "Since such a scandal has risen, I am dutybound to do away with it, because you are my all in all."² Bhavabhūti has seen into the meaning of these lines and took the bold step of expounding it clearly and upholding it. Both the Nāṭakas of Bhavabhūti have something new to offer to the readers. In this work, his attempt is to show, how the husband Rāma suffered by the dutifulness of the king Rāma. He, by exiling Sītā, was actually banishing himself. This characterization is in accord with the idea suggested by Kālidāsa when he said, "She did not know that Rāma had turned from the 'Kalpadruma' he was, to be a tree of swords." Bhavabhūti expanded the idea contained in the use of "Ātmani" there and proved it.

In this connection, it is worth noticing that the poet was following the footsteps of Kālidāsa than of

1. उत्खातलोकन्नयकण्टकेऽपि सत्यप्रतिज्ञेऽप्यविकल्पनेऽपि ।

त्वां प्रत्येकस्मात्कलुषं प्रवृत्तावस्त्यैव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे ॥ R. V. XIV. 73

2. अहं त्यक्ता च ते वीर अयशोभीरुणा जने ।

यच्च ते वचनीयं स्यादपवादः समुत्थितः ॥

मया च परिहर्तव्यं त्वं हि मे परमा गतिः ।

वक्तव्यश्चैव नृपतिर्धर्मेण सुसमाहितः ॥ V. R. VII. 48. 13-14

Vālmīki. In the Rāmāyaṇa, we have already seen the sharp words used by Rāma to Sītā, which caused her undergo the fire-ordeal. Once again, when the scandals arose, the king decided to do away with them by resorting to extreme means. His duty demanded that he should satisfy the people at any cost. It is to this duty that Kālidāsa points out when he says, "Knowing that the scandal could not be stopped by anything else, he decided to remove it by abandoning his wife."¹ Kālidāsa used his words with great care. Every one of them is apt and very significant. The word *tyāga* seems to have special significance here, where it is used in connection with the "Patnī", the very derivation of which word suggests the constant companionship with the "Pati".

In the first act of Uttara-Rāmācharita, it is this oneness of the couple that is pictured clearly by the various incidents and conversations. The mere reference to the fire-ordeal that Sītā had to undergo, seems to be unbearable to Rāma. He declares with obvious vehemence, "How can anything further sanctify her who is sacred by her very birth? Holy water and fire do not require anything else to purify them."² Rāma was sure that this scandal was going to be a lifelong one for Sītā, and he says so.³ At the same time, he realises how undeserving this treatment was. He remembers the last time when he himself was forced to say cruel and hard words to his beloved wife, whom he

1. निश्चित्य चानन्यनिवृत्तिं वाच्यं त्यागेन पत्न्याः परिमार्ष्टुमैच्छत् ।

R. V. XIV. 35

2. रामः —शान्तं पापम् । (ससान्त्ववचनम् ।)

उत्पत्तिपरिप्लुतायाः किमस्याः पावनान्तरेः ।

तीर्थोदकं च वल्लिश्च नान्यतः शुद्धिमर्हतः ॥ U. R. Ch. I. 13

3. रामः —देवि देवयजनसंभवे, प्रसीद । एष ते जीवितावधिः प्रवादः ।

U. R. Ch. I. p. 10

knew to be pure. He is full of repentance for his own inexcusable behaviour to her, and he openly apologises for the same.¹ When again, he was told about the renewed scandal, he is broken-hearted. He wails that "this scandal which was once stopped by miraculous methods, still does not end, but is spreading all over, even as the poison of a mad dog."² And, his final decision is clothed in a language that is an eye-opener to the real feelings of Rāma. Here Kālidāsa's Rāma says, "I shall abandon her, even as I abandoned the kingdom once before at the order of my respected father."³ The suggestion contained in that simile is clearly expounded by Bhavabhūti. The Rāma of Uttara-Rāmacharita says, "Good people have to satisfy the world at all costs. After all, that is why my father kept his word, though he had to abandon me and also his own life in order to do it."⁴ His contention is quite obvious. Even as his father did, he himself also was actually throwing away his own life, while he was abandoning Sitā.

The offspring is the final seal on happy conjugal love. This is another contention of Bhavabhūti. There are many

1. रामः—कष्टोजनः कुलघनैरनुरञ्जनीय-

स्तन्नो यदुक्तमशिवं नहि तत्क्षमं ते ।

नैसर्गिकी सुरभिणः कुसुमस्य सिद्धा

मूर्ध्नि स्थितिर्न चरणैरवताडनानि ॥

U. R. Ch. I. 14

2. रामः—हा हा धिक्परगृहवासदूषणं य-

द्वैदेह्याः प्रशमितमद्भुतैरुपायैः ।

एतत् तत् पुनरपि दैवदुर्विपाका-

दालकं विषमिव सर्वतः प्रसुप्तम् ॥

U. R. Ch. I. 40

3. त्यक्ष्यामि वैदेहसुतां पुरस्तात्समुद्रनेमि पितुराज्ञयेव ।

R. V. XIV. 39

4. रामः—सतां केनापि कार्येण लोकस्याराघनं व्रतम् ।

यत्पूरितं हि तातेन मां च प्राणांश्च मुञ्चता ॥

U. R. Ch. I. 41

statements at various places in his works which eulogise the value of the child in the parents' lives. This is not a new idea to the Indian mind. From the earliest times, the motherhood of ten sons was considered to be the height of woman's happiness. The first act of Uttara Rāmacharita presents Sītā as worthy of special consideration because she was about to become a mother. The message of the elders sent from the hermitage, is proof enough for this.¹ Nowhere in the drama we are allowed to forget that Sītā was about to become a mother when she was led to exile. The remembrance of Kuśa and Lava in Janasthāna, at the sight of her adopted children, the elephant and the peacock, aroused combined feelings in the mind of Sītā.² Tamasā justifies those feelings, saying, "The offspring is the main foundation of the mutual love of husband and wife, and also the unique tie that binds their hearts together."³ In another place it is said, "The child is the final limit of mutual love."⁴ This being the case, it was impossible for Sītā and Rāma to remain separate even after the children were born. According to the laws of nature, as understood by Bhavabhūti, the final re-union of the couple was inevitable.

In all climes and times, men have laid down a much

1. अष्टावक्रः—इदं च भगवत्याऽरुन्धत्याः देवीभिः शान्तया च भूयो भूयः
संदिष्टम् । यः कश्चिद्भर्भदोहदो भवत्यस्याः सोऽवश्यमचिरान्मानयितव्य इति ।

U. R. Ch. I. p. 8

2. अ. सीता—भगवति तमसे अयं तावदीदृशो जातः । तौ पुनर्न जानामि—
कुशलवावेतावता कालेन कीदृशौ संवृत्ताविति ।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 78

- आ. भगवति तमसे एतेनापत्यसंस्मरणेनोच्छ्वसितप्रस्तुतस्तनी इदानीं
वत्सयोः पितुः संनिधानेन क्षणमात्रं संसारिण्यस्मि संवृत्ता ।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 78.

3. तमसा—किमत्रोच्यते । प्रसवः खलु प्रकर्षपर्यन्तः स्नेहस्य । परमेतदन्योन्य-
संश्लेषणं पित्रोः ।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 80

4. तमसा—अन्तःकरणतत्त्वस्य दम्पत्योः स्नेहसंश्रयात् ।

आनन्दग्रन्थिरेकोऽयमपत्यमिति कथ्यते ॥ U. R. Ch. III. 17

higher standard of sexual morality for women. So, during the times of battles and conflicts between various clans, the womenfolk were protected with great care by their men. In spite of this, it was not uncommon that women were carried off by the enemies. Great lawgivers like Vasiṣṭha, Atri, and Parāśara, ruled that if a woman is taken into captivity or ravished against her will, she ought not to be abandoned by her family. During the first half of the eighth century A.D., thousands of men and women were taken into captivity by the Muslim invaders from Sindh. Those of them who could effect their escape, were accepted back by their families.¹ Perhaps, this process going on before his very eyes suggested to Bhavabhūti the idea of the possible reunion of the separated couple.

To achieve this end, the poet brought Rāma and Sītā to a more human plane. The hero and the heroine of Uttara-Rāmācharita are inhabitants of this human world, bubbling with feelings and emotions common to all mankind. The Rāma of Uttara-Rāmācharita, is an ideal king, but at the same time he is also an ideal human being. Likewise, Sītā is a loving and obedient wife who has no life or existence apart from her husband.

Rāma, here, is in the double role of a king and a husband. His sense of duty is so strong and perfect, almost to a fault. Sītā knows this and is only proud of the fact. When Rāma, in answer to the message of Vasiṣṭha,² says, "I shall not be sorry to abandon love, kindness, happiness or even Jānaki herself to make my people happy",³ she

1. Elliot and Dawson : History of India As Told By Her Own Historians. p.126.

2. जामातृयज्ञेन वयं निरुद्धास्त्वं बाल एवासि नवं च राज्यं ।

युक्तः प्रजानामनुरञ्जने स्यात्स्तरुमाद्यशो यत्परमं धनं वः ॥ U. R. Ch. I. 11

3. रामः—यथा समादिशति भगवान्मैत्रावरुणिः ।

स्नेहं दयां च सौख्यं च यदि व जानकीमपि ।

आराधनाय लोकस्य मुञ्चतो नास्ति मे व्यथा ॥ U. R. Ch. I. 12

very proudly adds, "That is why you are the greatest of Raghus, my lord."¹ She had no desire in this world except to see the fame of her husband spreading.

The life of this Sītā is one dark night of sorrows. Tamasā gives a true portrait of her as seen throughout the play—the personification of the pangs of separation,² as it were. She is an ideal woman, an obedient wife, willingly accepting her lot, awaiting the pleasure of her lord and master, and desiring and praying only for his welfare and prosperity. She has a personality and individuality of her own, though she desires neither and is on a much higher plane than the Sītā of the Mahāvīracarita. In the first act of Uttara Rāmacharita we meet with Sītā who is a very loving and soft-hearted wife, and who is agonized by the unavoidable departure of her relatives and friends. But Rāma's constant presence and love console her. The Sītā whom we see at Janasthāna twelve years later seems to have changed very little. She is still devoted to the husband who banished her, and is drowned deep in the pangs of separation. The incidents in the second and third acts of Uttara Rāmacharita are only the expositions of the truth acclaimed by Kālidāsa, "Sītā was banished from the house by Rāma for fear of scandals, but never from his heart."³

Yet Sītā as depicted by Bhavabhūti in the Uttara-Rāmacharita is quite different from the one portrayed by Kālidāsa in his Raghuvamśa. The order of banishment came in both cases really as a bolt from the blue. But the

1. सीता—अत एव राघवकुलधुरंधुर आर्यपुत्रः । U. R. Ch. I. p. 10

2. तमसा—परिपाण्डुदुर्बलकपोलसुन्दरं

दघती किलोलकबरीकमाननम् ।

करुणस्य मूर्तिरथवा शरीरिणी

विरहव्यथेव वनमेति जानकी ॥

U. R. Ch. III. 4

3. कौलीनभीतेन गृहाग्निरस्ता न तेन वैदेहसुता मनस्तः ॥ R. V. XIV. 84

reactions were typically different. Kālidāsa's Sītā recovered her balance of mind after the first shock was over. Of course, the idea of suicide occurred to her for the flash of a moment. The shame of the scandal and the plight in which she found herself as a result of the banishment tempted her to take the easy way of escape. But she remembered that the sprouts of the great Solar dynasty within her were to be protected.¹ That Rāma had to overlook his duty towards her made it doubly necessary for her to remember her duty to him, to the children, to the family and to the country. Hence she decided to live and take care of the children. She who was the shelter of so many in the bygone days, scorned to seek protection of another. Rāma, and Rāma alone would have to look after her, if not as the husband, then, in the capacity of the King.²

Bhavabhūti's Sītā presents a great contrast. She is so weak and desperate and seems to have lost all courage, sense of propriety and perspective at that time of crisis. She actually threw herself into the Ganges, as announced by the Sūtradhāra at the beginning of the inner drama.³ Neither the consideration about her children nor the thought of duty seems to have entered her mind. While she was informed by her mother that she had given birth to twin sons, her hopeless answer was "I am a destitute. What shall I do with them?"⁴ If the divine mothers,

1. किं वा तवात्यन्तवियोगमोघे कुर्यामुपेक्षां हतजीवितेऽस्मिन् ।

स्याद्रक्षणीयं यदि मे न तेजस्त्वदीयमन्तर्गतमन्तरायः ॥

R. V. XIV. 65

2. नृपस्य वर्याश्चिमपालनं यत्स एव धर्मो मनुना प्रणीतः ।

निर्वासिताप्येवमतस्त्वयाहं तपस्विसामान्यमवेक्षणीया ॥ R. V. XIV. 67

3. सूत्रधारः—विश्वम्भरात्मजा देवी राज्ञा त्यक्ता महावने ।

प्राप्तप्रसवमात्मानं गङ्गादेव्यां विमुञ्चति ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. 2

4. सीता—अनाथाऽस्मि । किमेताभ्याम् ।

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 202

Gaṅgā and Pṛthvī, had not intervened, the end might have been as apprehended by Rāma and told by him to Vāsantī.¹ This Sītā is a weakling, a tender creeper which droops to the ground as soon as she is severed from the supporting tree. She is not capable of either anger or hate. The only occasion when a strong protest escaped her lips was when Rāma in his overwhelming grief exclaimed "My beloved, it is not proper that you abandon me in this condition."² Even then, the harshest words she could utter were, "My lord, this is indeed a perverted statement."³

When she saw her foster-son, the elephant, pointed-out by Vāsantī to Rāma, the blessing that escaped spontaneously from her heart is very significant, for it reflects the deeper wishes of her own heart. As Rāma once said that everything related to Jānakī was pleasant to him, except her separation,⁴ so also did Sītā feel that separation from her husband was the only unbearable thing. Hence she blessed her foster-son, "May you never be separated from your beloved."⁵

Though abandoned, there is a remote hope of reunion lurking in her mind, and it was this hope that enabled her to live. While Rāma lamented "How am I to bear this

1. रामः — त्रस्तं कहायनकुरङ्गविलोलदृष्टे-

स्तस्याः परिस्फुरितगर्भभरालसायाः ।

ज्योत्स्नामयीव मृदुबालमृणालकल्पा

कव्याद्भिरङ्गलतिका नियतं विलुप्ता ॥

U. R. Ch. III. 28

2. रामः — क्वासि देवी प्रसीद । न मामेवं विधं परित्यक्तुमर्हसि ।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 98

3. सीता — अयि आर्यपुत्र विप्रतीपमिवेतत् । U. R. Ch. III. p. 100

4. किमस्याः न प्रेयो यदि परमसह्यस्तु विरहः ॥ U. R. Ch. I. 38

5. सीता — अवियुक्त इदानीमयं दीर्घायुरनया सौम्यदर्शनया भवतु ।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 78.

unending separation, which has no remedy."¹ It is immediately reflected in the desperate words of Sītā, "Un-ending, unfortunate and cursed that I am."² When the reunion was managed by divine intervention, she accepted it as a matter of course and heaved a sigh of relief, saying, "I am brought back to life."³

One cannot imagine the Sītā of the Rāmāyaṇa or the Raghuvamśa accepting the position so meekly. They, specially the latter, with the inherent sense of self-respect and dignity, would and could never reconcile to the ignominy of depending on fickle public opinion to obtain their rightful place. They would prove their purity to one and all in a way which would awe the spectators and kill all doubts for ever. But the Sītā of Bhavabhūti had only one end and aim in her life, the pleasure and happiness of her husband. If he was well, nothing else mattered to her. Ardent piety, spiritual and ascetic tenderness, complete abnegation of self and unlimited devotion to her husband, are the characteristics of this Sītā. She seems to represent a society wherein woman had no place, except as the most obedient servant of her husband, and no position, except that which is allowed to her by the kindness of man and a society dominated by him.

Other women characters, depicted herein, are the Queen Kauśalyā, Arundhatī, the divine mothers Gaṅgā and Pṛthvī, the semi-divine beings Vāsantī, Tamasā and Muralā and the ascetic student, Ātreya.

Tamasā and Muralā are two river divinities introduced in the interlude to the third act. Both of them were sent to

1. रामः—कथं तूष्णीं सहो निरवधिरयं त्वप्रतिविधः ।

U. R. Ch. III. 44.

2. सीता—निरवधिरिति । हा हतास्मि मन्दभागिनी ।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 102

3. सीता—प्रत्युज्जीवितास्मि ।

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 210

Janasthāna by the two well-wishers of Sītā and Rāma, namely Bhāgīrathī, the protecting deity of the Solar dynasty, and Lopāmudrā, the wife of Agasthya, who was anxious about Rāma. The latter sent Muralā to Godāvarī with the request that she must be alert and be prepared to receive Rāma whenever he may faint due to the sad remembrance brought to him by seeing the familiar places where he used to live with his beloved wife.¹ Tamasā was the messenger who brought the real consolation in the person of Sītā herself, though unseen by mortal eyes, according to the instruction of Goddess Gaṅgā.² Muralā is only a passing character, who fulfills her part and departs. Tamasā on the other hand, attracts one's attention by her loving and kind nature and sympathetic understanding of the whole situation. She behaves like an elder sister as well as a dear friend to Sītā. Though herself a divinity, she is fully aware of the human emotions that were working in the minds of both Rāma and Sītā. Her psychological approach to the whole situation, the clever way in which she made Sītā less and less self-

1. मुरला—सखि तमसे प्रेषितास्मि भगवतोऽगस्त्यस्य पत्न्या लोपामुद्रया
मरिद्धरां गोदावरीं अभिधातुम् । जानास्येव यथा वधूपरित्यागात्प्रभृति—
अनिभिन्नो गंभीरत्वादन्तर्गूढघनव्यथः ।

पुटपाकप्रतीकाशो रामस्य करुणो रसः ॥

अधुना च प्रतिनिवर्तमानेन रामभद्रेण नियतमेव पञ्चवटीवने वधूसहवास-
विस्रम्भसाक्षिणः प्रदेशाः द्रष्टव्याः । तेषु च निसर्गधीरस्याप्येवंविधायामव-
स्थायामतिगंभीराभाभोगशोकक्षोभसंवेगात्पदेपदे महान्ति प्रमादस्थानानि
शङ्कनीयानि रामभद्रस्य । तद्भगवति गोदावरि ! तत्र त्वया सावधानया
भवितव्यम् ।

U.R. Ch. III. p. 60

2. तमसा—“इदानीं तु शम्भूकवृत्तान्तेनानेन सम्मावितजनस्थानगामिनं राम-
भद्रं सरयूमुखादुपश्रुत्य भगवती भागीरथी यदेव भगवत्या
लोपामुद्रयास्नेहादाशङ्कितं तदेवाशङ्क्य सीतासमेता केनचिदिव
गृहाचारव्यपदेशेन गोदावरीं विलोकयितुमागता ।” इत्यादि ।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 62-63

conscious, inspite of the latter's bashfulness and modesty due to the presence of herself, an elderly companion, and also the method by which she made Sītā revive Rāma whenever he fell unconscious, are very remarkable and touching. Tamasā seems to have been influenced by the love and kindness of Mother Gaṅgā herself who was ever anxious for her beloved children who had become toys of a bad fate. From there onwards, one feels the presence of the great divinity herself as the saviour behind the separated couple.

Vāsantī, the Vanadevatā, who was the dearest and inseparable friend of Sītā while she lived at Panchavatī, seems to be a shining contrast to the understanding and sympathetic Tamasā. Of course, much of the difference in attitudes were due to their different circumstances; for, while Tamasā knew all that was to be known about the whereabouts and condition of Sītā, Vāsantī was still under the shock of the knowledge about the injustice done to Sītā, which came to her as a bolt from the blue. Ātreya brought the news in a casual way and then went her way. The meeting with Rāma, after that rude shock which was still fresh, only added to Vāsantī's sorrow and indignation. Her insinuation addressed to Rāma framed in those pathetic words,¹ and her angry question, "Oh, cruel one! you care only for fame. But can there be a worse infamy than this you have acquired? Tell me oh Lord, have you ever thought as to what might have happened to her in that terrible wilderness?"² are clear indications of the fact that she had visualised only one side of the question, namely, the condi-

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1. वासन्ती—त्वं जीवितं त्वमसि मे हृदयं द्वितीयं
 त्वं कौमुदी नयनयोरमृतं त्वमङ्गे ।
 इत्यादिभिः प्रियशतेरनुगृह्य मुग्धां

तामेव शान्तमथवा किमिहोत्तरेण ॥ U. R. III. 26

2. वासन्ती—प्रिय कठोर यशः किल ते प्रियं
 किमयशो ननु घोरमतः परम् ।

tion of Sītā. Through Vāsantī, perhaps, Bhavabhūti was bringing to the forefront the feelings of all those who saw only the injustice and desire for fame of Rāma, the king. The poet's intention in this third act, may be to portray the other side of the picture also, namely, the plight of Rāma who was also a victim to the same injustice committed by himself. Rāma, devoid of his kingly paraphernalia, is presented in Janasthāna, in the company of Vāsantī, the next best representative of Sītā herself. Vāsantī personifies the single-minded devotion of a friend. As a friend of Sītā, she accused Rāma of heartlessness, injustice and cruelty. But, by the end of that meeting, though unconvinced as to the justice of his actions, she was fully aware of the hard lot of Rāma who was actually undergoing hell-fire by the constant remembrances of his beloved whom he had no hopes of seeing again. Vāsantī must have been convinced as Sītā herself was, about the reality that Rāma could banish Sītā only from the house but not from his heart. The final proof to this fact came in the statement of Rāma that his companion in the horse-sacrifice was the golden image of Sītā;¹ hearing which Sītā exclaimed in great relief and consolation, "Thus, the disgrace of my banishment has been uprooted by my Lord."²

The whole of the third act here seems to be a clever device of Bhavabhūti to satisfy those who blindly blamed Rāma. By banishing Sītā, in order to satisfy a group of foolish people, he had taken on himself much more than

किमभवद्विपिने हरिणीदृशः

कथय नाथ कथं वत मन्यसे ॥

U. R. Ch. III. 27

1. रामः—अस्ति चेदानीमश्वमेधाय सहधर्मचारिणी मे ।.....हिरण्मयी
सीताप्रतिकृतिः ।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 102

2. सीता—आर्यपुत्र इदानीमस्ति त्वम् । अहो उत्थातमिदानीं मे परित्याग-
लज्जाशल्यमार्यपुत्रेण ।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 102

what he could bear. But the outsiders, including even the mothers of Rāma, saw only the plight of Sītā. Even Sītā had her own doubts at times. Unless and until Sītā was convinced of the loyalty of her husband, there could have been no real reunion of that ideal couple. Moreover, the bold step of recasting the hitherto known denouement of the Rāmāyaṇa could be acceptable to the public only if the emotional reconciliation was fully established. So, through Vāsantī, the question was raised and answered to the full satisfaction of at least Sītā, if not the others who could not understand the true Rāma behind the kingly attire. Thus, above and beyond being the best friend of Sītā, Vāsantī serves as an instrument to clear the much misunderstood character of Rāma in the emotional plane as a husband.

Ātreyī is the one female character who does not have much direct connection with the plot of the play, except informing Vāsantī about the banishment of Sītā. But, she serves a purpose in the study of the play. She tells that she was on her way to Agastya, for higher studies, because she could not cope with the new students who have come to study at the feet of her former preceptor Vālmiki. This statement is a clear proof of the fact that women were allowed to take to higher studies if they wished so, and co-education was not forbidden. The conclusion we could draw from Mālatīmādhava, in this connection finds support in this statement of Ātreyī.

All the three queens of Daśaratha are referred to in the Uttara Rāmācharita. But only Kauśalyā, the mother of Rāma is actually presented on the stage. What we hear and see about the elderly women in this play give us an idea of their revered position in the household. The partiality of those elders for their adored daughter-in-law, is obvious in the first act itself. Aśṭāvakra, who brings messages to Rāma from his preceptor has a special message for him from the elder women led by Arundhatī. They specially instruct him that every one of her wishes should be fulfilled

immediately. And Rāma, like a dutiful son answers bashfully, "I shall do so if she tells me." The influence they could wield over the household is more pronounced in the next scene, where the important incidents of the twelve years were summarily stated by Ātreyī to Vāsantī. The first question that arose in the mind of Vāsantī when she heard of the facts is very significant in this connection. She asks in utter despair, "How could this happen when the old queens are still alive and the family of the Raghus is under the guidance of the venerable Arundhatī and Vaśiṣṭha?"¹ The answer she got justified Vāsantī's confidence in them. She was told that all were away in the hermitage of R̥ṣyaśringa attending the sacrifice which was to be of a duration of twelve long years.² Rāma did not stay even to consult the elders either, before he took the final step. As the king he thought his first duty was to please his people and he had Vaśiṣṭha's message³ to support his decision. But, he seemed to have got every thing wrong; for, when Arundhatī heard about what had happened, she refused to enter Ayodhyā, which had become a wilderness due to the absence of Sītā. The queen mothers were of the same mind; and they all went to stay in the hermitage of Vālmiki, on the advice of Vaśiṣṭha.⁴

1. वासन्ती—हा कष्टम् । आर्यारुन्धतीवसिष्ठाधिष्ठितेषु रघुकदम्बकेषु जीवन्तीषु
च प्रवृद्धासु राज्ञीषु कथमिदं जातम् । U. R. Ch. II. p. 44

2. आत्रेयी—ऋश्यशृङ्गाश्रमे गुरुजनस्तदासीत् । संप्रति तु परिसमाप्तं तद्वा-
दशवार्षिकं सत्रम् । U. R. Ch. II. p. 44

3. अष्टावक्रः—जामातृयज्ञेन वयं निरुद्धास्त्वं बाल एवासि नवं च राज्यम् ।
युक्तः प्रजानामनुरञ्जनेस्यास्तस्माद्यशो यत्परमं धनं वः ॥
U. R. Ch. I. 11

4. आत्रेयी—ततो भगवत्यरुन्धती नाहं वधूविरहितामयोध्यां गमिष्यामीत्याह ।
तदेव राममातृभिरनुमोदितम् । तदनुरोधाद्भगवतो वसिष्ठस्य
परिशुद्धा वाचो वाल्मीकितपोवनं गत्वा तत्र वत्स्यामि इति ।

U. R. Ch. II. P. 44

Vālmiki and Vasiṣṭha, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sumantra are almost the same as found in the Rāmāyaṇa. But, the female characters depicted by Bhavabhūti are very much different from their prototypes in the Ādikāvya. Kauśalyā, as described in the Rāmāyaṇa, belongs to the general type of queens as existed in ancient Kṣatriya families. Her advice to Sītā who was just starting off to the forest following her husband of her own accord, seems to be in the typical style of a mother-in-law to the daughter-in-law.¹ There seems to be nothing characteristic of a mother who bids farewell to a beloved child who was leaving the hearth and home for long years to come. The queen mother enumerates the evils of women and advises Sītā not to behave disrespectfully to Rāma, because he was really her god who must always be worshipped.² Sītā had to assure her in so many plain words that she was not such a woman who would behave disrespectfully to her husband.³ And later, at the time of the banishment of Sītā, the queens seem to be as good as non-existent, except for the message that Sītā sent through Lakṣmaṇa. On the whole, in the Rāmāyaṇa, though the highest ideal of womanhood is held up in Sītā, the other women are more or less the ordinary types. Kauśalyā, Kaikeyī, Sumitrā, Tārā, Mandodarī and all others are ordi-

1. स त्वया नावमन्तव्यः पुत्रः प्रब्राजितो वनम् ।
तव दैवतमस्त्वेष निर्धनः सधनोऽपि वा ॥ V. R. II. 39. 25
2. अ. न मामसज्जनेनायं समानयितुमर्हति ।
धर्माद्विचलितुं नाहमलं चन्द्रादिव प्रभा ॥ V. R. II. 39. 28
- आ. साऽहमेवंगता श्रेष्ठा श्रुतधर्मपरावरा ।
आर्ये किमवमन्येऽहं स्त्रीणाम् भर्ता हि दैवतम् ॥ V. R. II. 39. 31
3. पृथिवी—किं त्वापातदुःसहरनेहसवेगेनैवं ब्रवीमि ।
न पुनर्न जानामि सीतास्नेहं रामभद्रस्य ॥
दह्यमानेन मनसा दैवाद्वत्सां विहाय सः ।
लोकोत्तरेण सत्वेन प्रजापुण्यैश्च जीवति ॥ U. R. Ch. VII. 7

nary women who rise or fall according to the circumstances in which they were placed. Even Arundhatī, the celebrated "Sati" is no exception. But there is a world of difference found between them and the same characters portrayed by Bhavabhūti. There is a soft, sweet light that comes out of those very same women characters who seem to engulf all those around them in their cool and embalming lustre.

Kauśalyā is actually visible on the stage only in the fifth act of the play. But the picture is impressed on the mind, never to be rubbed off. The sorrow of this mother-in-law, is in no way less than that felt by Pṛthivī, the mother who had given birth to Sītā. Mother Earth, true to her forbearing nature, is prepared to see both sides of the question and pardon Rāma for his shortcoming. But, Kauśalyā could not and would not even see the face of her own son who was so heartless and unjust to her beloved child, Sītā.¹

Pṛthivī and Bhāgīrathī are two divine beings brought to the human plane by the poet. The depiction of these two characters in the Uttara Rāmacharita is quite unique in the Sanskrit literature. Much has been said about the unlimited patience of Mother Earth, who is rightly called 'Sarvāma-sahā' or the 'all-forbearing'. But nowhere else has the picture been so noble and permanent as to justify the name well. Of course she gets besides herself at the sight of Sītā who, in her agony, had thrown herself into the waters of the Ganges. When consoled by the equally bewildered Bhāgīrathī, she asks in all seeming helplessness as any other ordinary mother, "How can I get any consolation, having given birth to Sītā ?",² and counts one by one the unbear-

1. कञ्चुकी—राजर्षे अनेनैव मत्पुत्रा चिरपरित्यक्तारामभद्रमुखचन्द्रदर्शनां
नार्हसि दुःखयितुमतिदुःखिताम् देवीम् ।

U. R. Ch. IV. p. 118

2. पृथिवी—देवी ! सीतां प्रसूय कथमाश्रसिमि ।

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 198.

able sorrows her daughter had to bear.¹ And when Bhāgīrathī tries to put all the blame on fate, she flares up and says, "He did not remember the hand he held at such young age, nor remembered Janaka, nor Agni who testified to her sacredness, nor me, nor her implicit dedication to his will, and not even the offsprings".² It is worth noticing here, that this stanza, specially the first line, is a repetition of Sītā's words³ in the Rāmāyaṇa when she was repudiated by Rāma at Laṅkā. Mother Pṛthvī gets angry when Sītā takes Rāma's name and sighs in despair.⁴ But the very next moment she is back as her real self. She hastens to stop the folded hands of Bhāgīrathī in apology, and with indescribable love and sympathy says, "I know the deep and unlimited love of Rāma for Sītā", and adds in the most characteristic way of an indulgent mother, "Having abandoned my darling with a burning heart, due to force of circumstances, he is still alive only by the good luck of his subjects and through his own super-human will-power."⁵ Mother Earth and Goddess Bhāgīrathī, though divine, are very human in

1. सोढश्चिरं राक्षसमध्यवासस्त्यागोद्वितीयो हि सुदुःसहोऽस्याः ।

U. R. Ch. VII. 4

2. न प्रमाणीकृतः पाणिर्बाल्ये बालेन पीडितः ।

नाहं न जनको नाग्निर्नानुवृत्तिर्न सन्ततिः ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 198

3. अपदेशेन जनकाभ्योत्पत्तिर्वसुधातलात् ।

मम वृत्तं च वृत्तज्ञ बहु तेन पुरस्कृतम् ॥

न प्रमाणीकृतः पाणिर्बाल्ये बालेन पीडितः ।

मम भक्तिश्च शीलं च सर्वं ते पृष्ठतः कृतम् ॥ V. R. VI. 119. 15-16

4. पृथिवी—आः कस्तवार्यपुत्रः ।

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 198

5. पृथिवी—न पुनर्न जानामि सीतास्नेहं रामभद्रस्य ।

दह्यमानेन मनसा देवाद्वत्सां विहाय सः ।

लोकोत्तरेण सत्वेन प्रजापुण्यैश्च जीवति ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. 7

their feelings and understanding. The way in which both of them fulfill their respective responsibilities put on them at different occasions by Rāma¹ is very admirable and touching.² What Arundhatī was to the mother of Rāma—the same was Bhāgīrathī to the mother of Sītā. Arundhatī kept up the spirit of Kauśalyā by quoting to her the words of Vasiṣṭha that all would end well,³ while Bhāgīrathī kept up the patience of not only Mother Earth, but also the life and spirit of Sītā and Rāma in Janasthāna. It is her foresight that made it possible for Sītā to see her long separated husband and know his real feelings for her, which actually helped to wash off the misunderstandings and doubts which might have been lurking in her mind. It was Bhāgīrathī's knowledge of Rāma in his true colours and his deep love for Sītā that enabled her to foresee the condition in which he would be when once again he would enter Janasthāna. Of course, he was coming there as a king to perform his hard kingly duty, namely, putting an end to the Śūdra who violated the rules of society, by taking up the Brāhma-

1. अ. रामः—सा त्वमेव स्नुषायामरुन्धतीव सीतायां शिवानुध्यानाभव ।

U. R. Ch. I. p. 16

आ. रामः—भगवति वसुंधरे सुश्लाघ्यां दुहितरमवेक्षस्व जानकीम् ।

U. R. Ch. I. p. 36

2. (नेपथ्ये)

अ. जगत्पते रामचन्द्र ! स्मर्यतामालेख्यदर्शने मां प्रत्यात्मनो वचनं यथा सा त्वमम्ब ! स्नुषायामरुन्धतीव सीतायां शिवानुध्यानपरा भवेति तत्रानृणास्मि जाता ।

आ. उक्तमासीदायुष्मता वत्सायाः परित्यागे यथा भगवति वसुन्धरे ! श्लाघ्यां दुहितरमवेक्षस्व जानकीमिति । तदधुना कृतवचनास्मि प्रभोर्वत्सस्येति ।

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 208

3. अरुन्धती—अन्यं च किं न स्मरसि यदवोचदृश्यशृङ्गाश्रमे युष्माकं कुलगुरु-
र्भवितव्यतयेत्युपजातमेव । किं तु कल्याणोदकं भविष्यतीति ।

U. R. Ch. IV. p. 122

nical way of living. But, the motherly love of Bhāgīrathī made her realise that the very sight of Janasthāna, where he lived in company of his beloved wife, not as a king but as an ordinary man, would once more make him cease to be a king. And she knew that Sītā and Sītā alone could revive him in that possible crisis. Hence she sent Sītā accompanied by Tamasā, who was equally devoted to both of them and who was also in the know of things.¹ By this act of the Goddess, so humane in her understanding, the double purpose of consoling the long suffering couple and of paving the way for the final union was achieved. Thus, we see that those two women characters of the poet present the mingling of all that is best in the human nature with all that is lovable and sweet in the divine. Later dramas relating to the story of Rāma do portray these divinities and also some other similar characters ; but none rises to the perfection found here in this play.

Arundhatī, the wife of the sage Vasiṣṭha is a prominent personage in the Uttara Rāmācharita. She reminds us of the same character described by Kalidāsa in his Kumārasambhava, where it is said "Arundhatī who was in the midst of those sages, with her eyes fixed at the feet of her husband, shone like the very fruit of penances."² Just as Goddess Gaṅgā pacified the mother of Sītā, we see the saintly Arundhatī giving support to the mother of Rāma, and also pacifying the angry Janaka, the father of Sītā.

1. तमसा—उक्तमत्र भगवत्या भागीरथ्या—वत्से देवयजनसंभवे सीते ! अद्य खत्वायुष्मतोः कुशलवयोर्द्वादशजन्मसंवत्सरस्य संख्यामङ्गलग्निरभिवर्तते । तदात्मनः पुराणश्चशुरमेतावतो मानवस्य राजषिवंशस्य प्रसवितारं सवितारमपहृतपाप्मानं देवं स्वहस्तापचितैः पुष्पैरुपतिष्ठस्व ।...इति । अहमप्याज्ञापिता तमसे ! त्वमयि प्रकृष्टप्रेमैव वधूर्जानकी । अतस्त्वमेवास्याः प्रत्यनन्तरीभव इति ।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 64

2. तेषां मध्यगता साध्वी पत्युः पादापितेक्षणा ।

साक्षादिव तपःसिद्धिर्बभासे बह्वरुन्धती ॥

K. S. VI. 11

Arundhatī was in the know of things and was awaiting the proper time for the happy union, in the contrivance of which she also had an important part to play. She repeatedly assures Kauśalyā, that all would end well. Her praise of Sītā is always profuse and unreserved, while her understanding and sympathy for Rāma is quite genuine.

Even as Vasiṣṭha held the power to lead the king and guide him in all affairs, so was Arundhatī the counsellor and friend of the women of the royal family. In Arundhatī the poet seems to hold up the same ideal of the oneness of man and woman which was held up by Kālidāsa centuries before him. Every poet who came after Kālidāsa was influenced by him in one way or other. We have already seen how Śrī Harṣa had adapted in his own plays various situations, incidents and even ideas first envisaged by Kālidāsa. But those adaptations were more or less superficial, because the understanding is of the material plane only. On the other hand, Bhavabhūti seems to have understood and accepted the inner meanings of those pictures drawn by the master-poet. And perhaps, that is the reason why Uttara-Rāmacharita held its place throughout the ages, even as the works of Kālidāsa, while most of the other dramas including Bhavabhūti's own earlier plays receded into the back rows.

As Vasiṣṭha sent the message to Rāma that he should be ever ready to please his subjects, Arundhatī joined in with the instruction that Sītā's wishes were always to be fulfilled. But, as fate would have it, that injunction of Arundhatī itself paved the way for the easy banishment of Sītā. It was Arundhatī who decided for staying back from Ayodhyā where such terrible injustice was done to the noblest women ever lived. And Vasiṣṭha could only direct the queens led by his spouse to the next best place for them, the abode of Vālmiki. It was Arundhatī who induced Kauśalyā to go and meet the king Janaka who was really the injured party. And finally it was Arundhatī who

accepted back Sitā from the protecting dieties, Mother Earth and the Goddess Bhāgīrathī, and achieved the final union of the eternal couple, after forcing the general public to see their mistake in doubting the character of the noblest woman in the world.¹

Arundhatī and Vasiṣṭha in this play seem to illustrate the truth of the oneness of Prakṛtī and Puruṣa as described by Kālidāsa in his Kumārasambhava,² the Puruṣa being the passive witness giving inspiration to the Prakṛtī, who actually acts and makes the universe exist. The exclamation of Vāsantī, "Arundhatīvasiṣṭhādhiṣṭiteṣu Raghukulakadam-bakeṣu"—while the family of Raghus was guided and protected by Arundhatī and Vasiṣṭha, is really the keynote of the situation as we visualise it. The departure of the queen mothers led by Arundhatī under the protection of Vasiṣṭha, started the dark night for Rāma and Sitā. Rāma away from

1. (पुनर्नेपथ्ये)

अ. अरुन्धति जगद्वन्द्ये ! गङ्गापृथ्व्यो जुषस्व नौ ।
अपितेयं तवावाम्यां सीता पुण्यव्रता वधूः ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. 17

आ. त्वरस्व वत्से ! वंदेही मुख शालीनशीलताम् ।
एहि जीवय मे वत्सं प्रियस्पर्शेन पाणिना ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. 18

इ. भो भोः पौरजानपदाः, इयमधुना भगवतीभ्यां वसुन्धराजाह्नवीभ्या-
मेवं प्रशस्यमाना ममारुन्धत्याः समर्पिता पूर्वं च भगवता वैश्वानरेण
निर्णीतपुण्यचारित्रा सन्नह्यकैश्च देवैः संस्तुता सावित्रकुलवधूदेवयजन-
सम्भवा सीतादेवी परिगृह्यतामिति कथमिह भवन्तौ मन्यन्ते ।

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 210

ई. नियोजय यथाधर्मं प्रियां त्वं धर्मचारिणीम् ।
हिरण्मय्याः प्रतिकृतेः पुण्यप्रकृतिमध्वरे ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. 19

2. त्वामामनन्ति प्रकृतिं पुरुषार्थप्रवर्तिनीम् ।
तद्दिशिनमुदासीनं त्वामेव पुरुषं विदुः ॥

K. S. II. 13

his wise preceptor, lost his sense of proportion and values. In his eagerness to do his duty to the people, he forgot his duty to his wife, though he was reminded of the same by the message of Arundhatī and other elders of the family. This wrong was righted only after he was once again brought back to the protection of that saintly couple at the hermitage of Vālmīki in due course, and after undergoing the fire ordeal of indefinite separation which made Rāma realise the value of Sītā, who was really a part of his own self.

In this play, Bhavabhūti has not only depicted the oneness of man and woman, but he has also portrayed the possibility of true and pure friendship between man and woman. He had already drawn the picture of friendship between Kāmandakī, Bhūrivāsu and Devarāta, in his second play. The friendship they cultivated in their student life was so strong that the nun Kāmandakī turned herself to a match-maker for the sake of her friends' children. In the present play the healthy friendship between Janaka, Daśaratha and Kauśalyā is portrayed with picturesque description. Janaka, though a sage and a "sṭhitaprajña", lost his balance of mind whenever he remembered the insult his daughter had to suffer, twice, for no fault of hers. He got so enraged at times that he was prepared to avenge her either by the bow or by curse.¹ Only the intervening of Arundhatī² and the pacifying words of the Kanchukin along with the sad condition of his old friend could stay his anger. At the advice of the family preceptor Vasiṣṭha, Kauśalyā went to see the king, Janaka, though with great hesitation. His just rage intimidated all who were in any way related to Rāma. Even Arundhatī had to humbly apologise to him for

1. एतद्वैशसघोरवज्रपतनं शश्वन्ममोत्पश्यतः

क्रोधस्य ज्वलितुं ऋटित्यवसरश्चापेन शापेन वा ।

U. R. Ch. IV. 24

2. राजन्नपत्यं रामस्ते पाल्याश्च कृपणाः जनाः ।

U. R. Ch. IV. 25

the wrong done to him and his family. Janaka very tauntingly enquired after the welfare of the King's mother,¹ and in reply was told that he should not be so cruel to that poor queen who was beside herself with sorrow, and who had refused to see the face of her son because of his treatment of Sītā.² When after all, he became himself, he remembered the past in all its pleasant details, which had become painful at that time due to the changed circumstances. His finer feelings revived and he began to repent about the treatment he meted out to his friend's dearest and honoured wife whom he had met after a long time.³ His memories of the past portray before us, a healthy friendship between two human beings irrespective of sex or relationship. Janaka remembered now Daśaratha, when alive, used to respect him quite out of keeping with the conventions of the day. According to the general custom it was the father of the girl who worshipped the relations of the boy; but in this case, it was Janaka, the father of Sītā, who was worshipped by Daśaratha,⁴ the father of Rāma. When there were quarrels between Kauśalyā and her husband, Janaka became the mediator, and though he became the target of censure

1. जनकः—आर्यं गुप्ते अप्यनामयमस्याः प्रजापालकस्य मातुः ।

U. R. Ch. IV. p. 116

2. कञ्चुकी—राजर्षे अनेनैव मन्युना चिरपरित्यक्तरामभद्रमुखचन्द्रदर्शनां नार्हसि दुःखयितुमतिदुःखिताम् देवीम् ।

U. R. Ch. IV. p. 118

3. जनकः—हन्त हन्त ! सर्वथा नृशंसोऽस्मि संवृत्तः । यश्चिरस्य दृष्टाप्प्रिय-
सुहृदः प्रियदारान्न स्निग्ध पश्यामि ।

U. R. Ch. p. 118

4. कन्यायाः किल पूजयन्ति पितरो जामातुराप्तं जनं

सम्बन्धे विपरीतमेव तदभूदाराधनं ते मयि ।

त्वं कालेन तथाविधोऽप्यपहृतः सम्बन्धबीजं च तद्

घोरेऽस्मिन्मम जीवलोकनरके पापस्य घिग्जीवितम् ॥

U. R. Ch. IV. 16

from both, his decisions were finally accepted by both.¹ These and similar instances found in this play show the trend in which Bhavabhūti's mind worked in connection with the position of women and also the mutual relationship of the sexes.

In Bhavabhūti's plays we trace a revolutionary mind at work. He ventured to bring forward characters and situations which did not agree with the conventions of the day—a fact proved by the obvious disappointment he had to suffer about his first two works. He did not succeed in pleasing his contemporaries by presenting the real pictures. His full belief in the equality of woman and man, is seen all through his dramas, mainly so in his Uttara-Rāmacharita. In the last mentioned play Arundhatī, the most revered of all, says that she worshipped Sītā for her qualities and adds the general dictum, that it is the virtues that count, not age or sex.²

As has been already noticed, the first two plays seem to depict more or less the real condition of society as the poet saw it. This is true to a great extent where the female characters are concerned. The women do not seem to have had an enviable position in the society, nor do the women characters of the plays command any respect. Specially, in

1. यदस्याः पत्युर्वा रहसि परमं दूषितमभू-

दभूवं दम्पत्योः पृथगहमुपालम्भविषयः ।

प्रसादे कोपे वा तदनु मदधीनो विधिरभू-

दलं वा तत्स्मृत्वा दहति यदवस्कन्ध हृदयम् ॥

U. R. Ch. IV. 14

2. शिशुर्वा शिष्या वा यदसि मम तत्तिष्ठतु तथा

विशुद्धेऽर्क्षस्त्वयि तु मम भक्तिं द्रढयति ।

शिशुत्वं स्त्रैणं वा भवतु ननु वन्द्यासि जगतां

गुणाः पूजास्थानं गुणिषु न च लिङ्गं न च वयः ॥

U. R. Ch. IV. 11

the prakaraṇa, Mālatī-Mādhava, even those girls who belong to noble and cultured families, do not hesitate to cut jokes of quite a low order,¹ and this might have provoked adverse criticism reasonably enough. Perhaps these experiences set the poet thinking and those resulted in the last play which deviated completely from the trodden path. He chose a well-known theme. But with the undaunted courage of his convictions, he decided to give a new turn to the last phase of Rāma's life, and he created a new story based on the old theme. His admiration for Kālidāsa might have given him an insight into the suggestive creations of the masterpoet. Bhavabhūti might have understood the lesson his predecessor wished to teach the world. He himself, became convinced of the mutual fulfilment of man and woman in each other. True poet that he was, he wished to expound to the public the truth he himself saw, and he set about the self-imposed job in his own way.

In the Uttara-Rāmacharita, the characters depicted are not the ordinary dramatic personages. It is the ideal that is shown—the ideal that held the attention of the common man, and raised him to the heavenly bliss of witnessing and enjoying a thing complete, a thing of perfection that embalms the soul and stirs it to its very depths. The Sītā and Rāma found in this play are both very humane. They along with their friends and well-wishers speak the language of the heart, a language which appeals to all, irrespective of time or clime. At the same time they do not belong to the standard of the low terrestrial world. It is man raised to divinity by the sacredness and purity of his soul and the devotion to duty in all

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1. लवङ्गिका—सखि मदयन्तिके, स्फुटमाख्याहि । अपि तस्मिन्नवसरे स्नेह-
विभ्रमोजितहासविहसद्बुद्धरक्षितालोचननिरूपितमासनमयूरकं
परिजनाद्गोपनीयं भवति वा किं न वेति ।

spheres of life, however unpleasant or painful the performance of the same may mean, that is portrayed here.

In this play, Bhavabhūti visualised a happy household where the mutual love of the husband and wife, rose above all mundane levels to the ennobling heights of selfless devotion and mutual understanding. The love of the parents for their children, the authority of the preceptor over his disciples, the devotion and reverence felt by the disciples and children towards their elders, the loyalty and constancy of the servants to their masters, and similar ennobling emotions that save the man from lowering himself to the standard of animals, are depicted here with peculiar clarity and impressiveness.

Bhavabhūti holds up to posterity, his ideal of the joint family where the elders had made the welfare of their dependants the end and aim of their own lives, and received the fullest devotion, obedience, and respect in return. The relation of Rāma and Sītā together on the one hand and the elder queens, Arundhatī and Vasiṣṭha on the other, pictures such a happily knit family. Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Candraketu are all befitting constituents of the same. Vāsantī, Tamaśā and others, even Soudhātakī and Dāṇḍayana, are elements that contribute their mite to the family, which formed the nucleus of a happy and prosperous society as visualised by the dreaming poetic mind of Bhavabhūti. In such a society, everyone's welfare is the concern of everybody else, and everybody's good name becomes a treasure to be cherished and protected by every other. There the reunion of Sītā and Rāma who knew the hearts of each other only too well, was a definite possibility. Where there is confidence in oneself, the confidence and trust in others prevail and, consequently, mutual love, kindness and impartial judgement of character also exist. This is what has been achieved by the poet in this play. That vision of the poet, appealed to all, but it remained as an ideal for ever

after; for, man is so self-centered, egoistic, and hard to be able to rise to that height of self sacrifice.

With Bhavabhūti, perhaps, ended such constructive idealism, for, the pictures seen in the later dramas do not come up anywhere near to the characters pictured by this artist of feelings and emotions.

CHAPTER V

THE WOMEN IN THE PLAYS WRITTEN UPTO 1200 A. D.

The depiction of women characters by Bhavabhūti forms a landmark in the course of this study; for, after him, we do not find any writer, portraying women with so much life or individuality. A lull seems to have come over the literary atmosphere as far as the creative genius was concerned. Of course, poems and dramas were written, and writers were not lacking. But it must be admitted that no drama of any out-standing quality has come to posterity after the Uttara Rāmacharita. There are many plays belonging to this period, mentioned by scholars. Some of them are available in print also. Reading through them, one is left with the feeling of a stereotyped atmosphere. Love at first sight, a few obstacles and a happy ending in marriage form the theme of most of these plays. The story is generally taken from the epics and woven into a five-act or seven-act play in more or less the same strain, except for the varying literary skill of the different writers. This being the case, it is obvious that we cannot see much light as to the real position of women by just reading through these plays. And, in fact, there are very few women worthy of notice as individuals with any integrity of their own. Still, there are a few plays, which attract our attention due to the speciality of the theme or the method of its treatment.

The Kaumudimahotsava, a play ascribed to Princess Vijjikā, is one that is notable for two reasons. In the first

place, this is the one Sanskrit play known to have a woman as its author, and secondly, the love-story here, is interwoven with a political theme. We are able to trace reflections of the love as seen in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, the intrigues of *Cāṇakya* in the *Mudrārākṣasa* and the techniques of *Śarvilaka* in the *Mṛchhakatika* mingled in this play. *Kīrtimatī*, the heroine, the Princess of Mathurā, falls in love with *Kalyāṇavarman*, the Prince and heir to the throne of Magadha. The theme which is historical and romantic, centres round this couple.

The king of Magadha adopted a boy called *Caṇḍasena*, because he himself had no issues. Later on a son was born to the king, which caused disappointment to the ambitious *Caṇḍasena*, who turned against his foster-father, killed him and ascended the throne himself. The young prince was separated from his relations and was brought up in the penance-grove of *Jāvālī*. *Kīrtimatī*, the Princess of Mathurā, who came there to visit *Parivrājikā Yogasiddhi*, met the prince by accident and they both fell in love with each other. By the efforts of *Yogasiddhi*, who was no other than *Vinayandharā*, the foster-mother of prince *Kalyāṇavarman*, the union of the couple was achieved. By this time, the Prince with the help of his friends had reconquered his own kingdom. This, in a nutshell, is the story of the *Kaumudī-mahotsava*.

There are five women characters in this play, namely, Princess *Kīrtimatī*, the heroine, *Parivrājikā Yogasiddhi*, *Nipuṇikā*, the friend and maid-in-waiting of the Princess and two other maid-servants. The maid-servants are just the ordinary types, as found in the courts of kings. There is not much to say about them. They are the gay, happy-go-lucky attendants of the Princess, as found in the various dramas of the same type. *Nipuṇikā*, the confidant of the princess, reminds us of *Kanchanamālā*, the maid-in-waiting of *Vāsavadattā* in the *Ratnāvalī*, or of *Nipuṇikā*, the friend of *Irāvati* in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. Loyal, loving

and resourceful, she is a good friend whose first and foremost aim in life is the welfare of her mistress. It is due to her efforts that Yogasiddhi comes to know about the Princess and also of the Prince, her foster-son, who was long lost to her.

Kīrtimatī is a prototype of any ordinary Princess belonging to the middle ages. She is beautiful, simple and obedient, well-versed in fine arts—specially good and skilful in painting. It is this skill in painting that helps the thread of the story to continue. The painting of a portrait of her lover by the heroine, and the completion of the other half i.e. the portrait of the heroine, by someone else has its parallel in the Ratnāvalī of Śrī Harṣa. The character of Kīrtimatī has nothing specially noticeable. She is love-sick and wants to be united with her lover. But she is not strong or courageous enough to express her wishes openly to anyone. Only her dearest and nearest friend, Nipunikā, knows about it; and even that because the latter happened to overhear the words babbled by the Princess in her sleep. The whole situation is a pointer towards the condition of maidens at the time when the drama was written. For, it needs quite a courageous head and heart to show something on the stage which goes against the taste of the audience. A modest, bashful and obedient maiden must have been the ideal of the day. The princess may fall in love, but to follow the injunctions of the heart or even to speak about them to anyone, was against decorum. That is why, perhaps, the saintly Yogasiddhi, when she heard the whole story, decided to take a hand in it and to work for the happiness of the two, who were her foster-children.

Śakuntalā Rāo Śāstrī, in her introduction to this play, remarks : "The marriage of Princess Kīrtimatī recalls the *Svayamvara* practice, though with certain restrictions." This does not seem to be correct. According to the text of the play, Princess Kīrtimatī is sent to visit Yogasiddhi who was a friend of her mother, and a foster-mother to

herself. It was by chance that she was seen by Prince Kalyāṇavarman, then known as Kalyāṇasri, who happened to come to that hermitage on his way back to his own kingdom. There was love at first sight, and undoubtedly a desire to marry. But it was not a *Svayamvara*, because though both the Prince and Princess were love-stricken, neither of them took any step to bring about their union with each other. The Princess drew the picture of her lover even without knowing his feelings for her. It was a chance that a vulture carried it away, mistaking it for a piece of flesh, and dropped it in front of Parivrajikā Yogasiddhi, who recognised it as that of her foster-son with the help of the Prince's friend, Vaikhānasa, who reached there at that time. Once Yogasiddhi knew the identity of the prince, she took up the duty of bringing about the union of the two, who were equally beloved to her and whose prosperity was her sole concern in this world. Observing the nature of the Princess, as seen in the text of the play, we have no reason to think that she would ever dare to do anything that did not have the previous approval of her parents. This union can be considered anything akin to a *Svayamvara* only if the word is taken to mean falling in love with each other.

Svayamvara, in the ordinary sense of the term, means choosing of the husband by the bride from amongst the men assembled in the court of her father at his invitation. We hear of this custom in the Epics. In the historical times also we have heard of *Svayamvara*. Yogasiddhi wrote a small verse¹ under the portrait indicating that the two persons were the suitable husband and wife to each other. She then took the portrait to King Kīrtisena telling him that Goddess Bhavānī came to her in a dream and gave her the portrait with the inscription, thus indicating that it was the will

1. शौनकमिव बन्धुमती कुमारमविमारकं कुरङ्गीव ।

अर्हति कीर्तिमतीयं कान्तं कल्याणवर्माणम् ॥ Kau. M. II. 15

of the Goddess that the two royal families should be united by marriage.

In the meanwhile, Kalyāṇavarman achieves a victory over his enemies and is established in his throne. So the Yādava King sends his ministers and the spiritual preceptor along with Kīrtimatī, the Princess, to congratulate him. There is nothing in the play to show how exactly the marriage was performed. In the last act of the play, the Purohita of the King of Mathurā meets Kalyāṇavarman and congratulates him on behalf of the king and presents a diamond necklace. There he says to himself that he would decide after consulting Mantragupta and Yogasiddhi, what should be done about the Princess.¹ Immediately after this, King Kalyāṇavarman retires to the pleasure-garden in a condition of longing for his beloved. The conversation between him and his friend, Vidūṣaka, indicates that he is not even aware of the presence of Kīrtimatī in his country. The King's soliloquy,² on the other hand, goes to prove that he has not yet met his beloved.

Then suddenly he comes across the Princess with Nipunikā in the garden. Kīrtimatī does not recognise him at first due to his being dressed in royal robes. She had seen him only in the penance-grove and realises who he was only after hearing his voice. Still she addresses him as "Āryaputra", and she talks freely to the King unlike on the previous occasion when she studiously avoided directly addressing him.

In the Ratnāvalī, the Mālatīmādhava and other plays we have already noticed that the young girls were strictly

1. Kau. M. p. 64

2. राजा—(आत्मगतं) चेतस्त्वया सहितमेव तथापिनेदं,
चक्षुः कृतार्थमिति केवलमातुरं मे ।
आवलिगते वरतनु स्वजने जनानां,
प्राप्ते मनोरथशतेऽपि कुतः प्रमोदः ॥

forbidden to talk to their lovers. They talked by proxy. In the first act of this play also the Princess does not talk to Kalyāṇavarman directly, it was her friend who replied to all the queries of the Prince. Hence, the mode of address and behaviour of Kīrtimatī in the last act leads one to think that she was already the wedded wife of the King. How, when, and where the marriage could have taken place, is a question that faces the student here. The only possible explanation seems to be that some portion of the text in this act might have been missing in the only manuscript available to the editor who got this play published. Otherwise, the behaviour of Kīrtimatī seems rather strange, to say the least.

The Parivrājikā called Yogasiddhi is an important female character in this play. She was the nurse of Prince Kalyāṇaśrī, and her name was Vinayandharā. When she was separated from the royal family and the little Prince, she took to the life of a mendicant and found shelter in the palace of Kīrtisena as the friend of his queen and the nurse of Kīrtimatī. When Kīrtimatī grew up, Yogasiddhi retired to the forests, and it is there that we meet her at the beginning of the play. She is more or less on the same level with Panditā Kauśikī of the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, and Sāṅkṛtyāyanī of the *Priyadarśikā*, but by nature and conduct, she is nearer to Kāmandakī in the *Mālatī-Mādhava* of Bhavabhūti. Though her actions are more or less on similar lines as the above mentioned mendicant women, her character suits more a match-maker than a woman of spiritual attainments. Though clad in ascetic garments, her mind is full of anxiety for the happiness of her foster-children. She plainly says, "Till I see her married to a loving husband and well-placed in a noble family, how can I be detached!"¹ She goes out of her way and adheres to all kinds of tricks to bring about the union of Kalyāṇavarman and Kīrtimatī.

1. परिव्राजिका—यावदेनामनुरक्तपतिकुलगामिनीं पश्यामि, तावत् कुतो मे निस्संगता ?

Kau. M. I. p. 24

Though she is called Bhagavatī Yogasiddhi and is respected as a lady mendicant, her own actions and behaviour do not at all suit the garb she wears !

Her portrait perhaps is representing the slow decline of Buddhism. Kāmandakī, as we have seen, definitely represents the deteriorated condition of the Buddhist nuns. According to Śakuntalā Rao Śāstrī, this play was written somewhere in the seventh century A. D. If it is so, this play must have been written in almost the same era as Bhavabhūti, or some time before. It may not be very wrong to say that the author of this play was also drawing a character from the society as she saw. She, being a Princess herself, must have been quite aware of the happenings of her own palace and what she has portrayed can be safely taken as reflections of the first-hand knowledge she had.

There are a few things which tell us about the position of women as recapitulated by the author of this play. Maidens were supposed to be timid, bashful and modest. They were well-skilled in the fine arts, such as painting, music and dance. What other things they learnt, we have no idea. But the fact that the author herself was a Princess and she, according to the stories heard, was proud enough of her own scholarship to compare herself with Sarasvatī, has its own story to tell !¹

Marriage was quite a necessary thing and parents were anxious to get their daughters married. Kīrtisena sent his daughter to Yogasiddhi in order to get the blessings of the saintly woman. The custom of taking the bride to the bride-groom's place is indicated in this play also, as in the Ratnāvalī and the Priyadarśikā. Kīrtisena sends his daughter along with his ministers to congratulate the newly crowned king Kalyāṇavarman and there were great celebrations

1. नीलोत्पलदलश्यामां विज्जिकां मामजानता ।

वृथा हि दण्डिना प्रोक्तं सर्वशुक्ला सरस्वती ॥

Kau. M. I. 1

arranged in connection with their arrival in the Magadha palace¹.

There is no opportunity to study the position of wife in this play, because, we do not meet with any one in that position. Women were allowed to enter the ascetic life when they became helpless is proved by the life of Vinayandharā, who is seen as Yogasiddhi, well respected by the kings as well as common people. But, it is also obvious that women who thus took to ascetism, still got themselves intermingled with the worldly affairs. Women in general talked Prākṛt and were considered to be easily moved. But, those women, who took to ascetism were considered to be above all worldliness. For example, when Yogasiddhi sees the picture of her foster-son, she faints at the remembrance of the child she had left. She feels anxious as to how he would have grown up to that age and appearance if he had lived. In this condition, she forgets all her disguise and begins to talk in Prākṛt. This change in the saintly lady greatly astonishes the maid Nipuṇikā who asks; "My lady, why this behaviour, suitable to the women of the harem? And how this uncultured language unsuitable to the great knowledge that you have acquired?"²

This plainly indicates that women who were learned and saintly did not talk Prākṛt. This characteristic also is one that we have seen from the time of Kālidāsa. All the Parivrājikās depicted in the Sanskrit dramas talk Sanskrit. It is only Yogasiddhi who switches off to Prākṛt in a condition of agitation. It is also noteworthy here that none of the others, whom we have already observed, ever lost their balance of mind, as Yogasiddhi does! Actually no occasion arose in any of those plays to make them lose it!

1. राज्यलाभसभाजनव्यपदेशेन शूरसेन सचिवेषु राजदुहितरमादाय प्राप्तेषु शङ्के समादिष्टोऽयमुत्सवः ।
Kau. M. V. p. 62

2. निपुणिका—भगवती ! कः एषोऽभ्यागारिक जनयोग्य आवासः ? केषा विज्ञान विशेष विसहशी असंस्कृता वाणी ? Kau. M. II. p. 28

Perhaps the author wishes to show that however detached one may appear to be, the real attachment and the true character never dies out ! Yogasiddhi talking in Prākṛt while she is unconscious is a very interesting psychological touch given to the situation by the author. It is a verified fact, that however well-versed in other languages and well-accustomed to them a person may be, when a sudden shock comes, it is the mother-tongue that breaks out from the person's mouth ! It is perhaps this observation of the human nature that prompted the author to make the Parivrajikā talk in Prākṛt at that critical moment. The woman, however much she might have trained herself in self-control, lost her balance the moment she was reminded of her dearest foster-son. That is the Mother's heart revealed by the author.

The custom of 'Sati', or a woman entering the funeral pyre with her husband seems to have become established by the time of Vijjikā. We have noticed references to this in the plays of Śrī Harṣa. Here, once more, we hear of the women who followed their husbands to the heaven. Ārya-rakṣa, describes the result of the attack of Candasena to Vardhamānaka, where he says, "Hear this also : After our fathers followed their masters (the king of Magadha) to heaven and our mothers also entered fire along with the great queens, we with our friends were taken to the deep forest by the nurse, Vinayandharā of the same age but were again separated from her who got frightened by hearing the roaring of the wild elephants."¹

Except for the few conclusions we could draw from the above discussions nothing could be known about the

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1. आर्यरक्षः—एतदपिश्रूयतां—ततोऽस्माकं जनयितारः स्वामिना सह स्वर्लोक-
मारूढाः मातरोऽपि महादेवीभिः सह भगवन्तमाशुशुक्षिमाश्रिताः वयमप्य-
धर्मघरेण स्वामिना समवयस्कया विनयन्धरया नाम धात्र्या प्रच्छन्नमेव रज-
न्यामटवी कान्तारमुपनीय वनगजवृंहित त्रस्तया सद्यो विप्रणाशिताः ।

position occupied by women in the political, social, or religious fields.

The Tāpasavatsarāja centering round Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī, the two queens of King Udayana, is another play which attracts our attention in this period. The theme of this play is political though love does have an important place. Unlike the Kaumudīmahotsava, here, the political and romantic issues are interdependent to the extent of the former being the motive for the latter. It is the story of Udayana, after his marriage with Vāsavadattā that is depicted.

In fact, this deals with the period between the incidents described in the Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyaṇa and those described in the Svapnavāsavadattā, as dramatised by the earlier poet Bhāsa. Really speaking, Anaṅgahaṛṣa describes the hows and whys of the disappearance of Queen Vāsavadattā and the marriage of Udayana with Padmāvatī, the Princess of Magadha. The characters in this play are more or less the same as in the Svapnavāsavadattā.

We have already studied the two famous plays by Bhāsa and two others written by Śrī Haṛṣa. Thus, the characters portrayed by Anaṅgahaṛṣa are in no way unknown to us. Vāsavadattā, Padmāvatī, Kānchanamālā and Sāṅkṛtyāyanī are already familiar names. So also are Udayana, Yaugandharāyaṇa and Rumaṇvān. All these people have their natures and temperaments very much akin to the same characters as depicted by the earlier poet Bhāsa. In the Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyaṇa, we have seen how, King Udayana absconded with Vāsavadattā, the daughter of Mahāsena after marrying her according to Gāndharva Vidhi. In the Svapnavāsavadatta we met with Vāsavadattā in the guise of Avantikā, accompanied by Yaugandharāyaṇa. In this play, we see the reason why the ministers and well-wishers of Udayana had to take the drastic step of burning a village and declaring that the queen and Yaugandharāyaṇa have

perished in the fire. The king's complete indifference to the affairs of the kingdom, and the rise of his enemies such as Āruṇi of Pāncāla, were causing anxiety to all concerned. Kauśambī was already lost. Only a small village remained. The alliance with the King of Magadha was quite necessary for the success of Udayana. The ministers, specially Yaugandharāyaṇa and Rumaṇvān, decided to do their best to bring their king back to his senses and restore him to his throne. In this play, the sense, sensibility and the greatness of women are pictured clearly in the personalities of both the queens, Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī. We find a refreshing change in the characterisation of women.

Udayana's attraction for Vāsavadattā had become an infatuation, and this was being a matter of concern and even resentment among the servants of the harem as is proved by the words of the Kancuki—

“Alas ! the attachment for things that are to be avoided !”

“Even defeating the purpose of his own famous minister Varṣarakṣita (Yaungandharāyaṇa), the king has entangled himself in this troublous net of sensual life.”¹

Yaugandharāyaṇa, the clever judge of character, knew where to look for help. He was sure that unless he secured Vāsavadattā's co-operation, nothing could be achieved. He was aware of the real love Vāsavadattā had for her husband. It was not an infatuation. She loved her husband enough, to make any sacrifice, to undergo any penance, for his welfare. That which was to be done by Vāsavadattā, was almost impossible for any woman of a lesser calibre. She had to leave her husband in such a way to make him believe that she was dead, in order to make way for Padmāvatī, the

1. कञ्चुकी—अहो ! विगर्हितेष्वनिर्वेदः ।

परिभूय पुनः प्रस्थममात्यं वर्षरक्षितं ।

देवेनात्मा स्वयं क्षितो विषमे विषयावटे ॥ Tā. V. I. 4

Princess of Magadha. The alliance with the king of Magadha was necessary to make Udayana strong. Yaugandharāyaṇa secured help from all quarters in the proper way. Pradyota was informed about the situation and his permission and help was ensured to carry out the plans he had thought out.

And then he himself approached Vāsavadattā to request her for her co-operation. He was a little doubtful, because he knew women were always frightened of separation.¹

But, Vāsavadattā rose to the occasion. The instruction of her father and the request of Yaugandharāyaṇa were accepted, because she saw the situation quite clearly. She willingly helped in separating the king from her, with the full knowledge that when she will meet him next there will be another woman to share his love. Her father wrote to her—"My darling child, leaving the infatuation and weakness of heart natural to women, even throw away your life, if necessary, in such a way, as will be quoted as the ideal for chaste women who really love their husbands."² There is no need to say that she did everything in her power to achieve this end.

Vāsavadattā behaves like a sensible, loving and noble woman throughout. Whether in her own role or in disguise, she does not lose her natural dignity as the queen.

The earliest source-book for all the plays centering round Udayana, is the *Bṛhatkathā* of Guṇādhya, which is not available in the original to us. As we could get at them

1. यौगन्धरायणः — प्रद्योतः स्वसुताप्रवासनविधौ दत्ताभ्यनुज्ञः कृतः

प्रारब्धा मगधेश्वरेण घटना तैस्तैरुपायक्रमैः ।

देवी मा...केवलं यदि मनः संस्तभ्यमत्प्राथिते

कुर्यात् साधु ततो वियोगविषये किन्तु स्त्रियः कातराः ॥

Tā. V. I. 6

2. अपि जीवितसंशयेन वत्से हृदयात् स्त्रीसुलभं विहाय मोहं ।

उपमानपदं पतिव्रतानां चरितैर्यासि यथा तथा विवेहि ॥ Tā. V. I. 10

through the later works, the *Bṛhatkathā Samgraha* and the *Kathā-Saritsāgara*, both based on the works of *Guṇādhyā*, there are many stories which tell how *Yaugandharāyaṇa* planned and achieved the marriage of *Udayana* with the Princesses of various kingdoms in order to add to his power more and more. The attainment of power through marriage-alliance used to be a common method in politics from very ancient days. In *Udayana's* case, it is more clear than anywhere else. *Udayana* belongs to the *Sacivāyattasiddhi* type of kings. Really, it is his ministers that manage everything in the name of the king, while the king himself enjoys life in the harem. Even his first marriage, the marriage with *Vāsavadattā*, was pre-planned by her father, as is clearly stated in the *Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyaṇa*.¹ Fortunately *Pradyota's* plans succeeded beyond all expectations because of *Vāsavadattā's* qualities that enslaved *Udayana* for ever. She was his first wife and she remained the most beloved as far as one could gather from the plays of *Bhāsa*, and also from the stories found in *Kathā Saritsāgara* etc. All the dramas that are available, uphold this fact with slight variations as in the plays of *Śrī Harṣa*.

In the *Svapnavāsavadattā* itself, *Bhāsa* had changed the original story to suit his dramatic purposes, as has been already noticed in a previous chapter.

Vāsavadattā and *Padmāvatī* are the main female characters and both have their individuality and dignity suitable to the age, position and status of each. Here, in this play *Anaṅgahaṛṣa* seems to have followed *Bhāsa* in the portrayal of these two royal ladies with better success. Though *Anaṅgahaṛṣa* has followed the trend of the story as depicted by *Bhāsa*, in the general outlines, the characters seem to rise and shine to a greater extent in this play. This is equally true in the case of *Vāsavadattā* and *Padmāvatī*,

1. Pr. Yau. I.

and even more so in the case of Udayana. The love of Udayana for Vāsavadattā, which amounted to an infatuation, was the main cause of the loss of his kingdom in both plays. The alliance with the Magadha King was a possible help to regain his sovereignty. Bhāsa had left out the father of Vāsavadattā from the plot. But Anaṅgahaṛṣa thought it more natural that Vāsavadattā should be blessed and advised by her father also, before she took the terrible and risky step of leaving her husband.

Even Darśaka, the brother of Padmāvatī is brought in to join hands with the ministers to drive away Aṛuṇi and reinstate Udayana. The reason for Darśaka's interest is the fact that Padmāvatī had fallen head over ears in love with the Vatsa King. And it is the brains of the loyal Yaugandharāyaṇa that is working behind the scenes in both the plays. But the difference is that in the Tāpasa-vatsarāja, Yaugandharāyaṇa purposely sends Sāṅkrītyāyanī to Padmāvatī with definite instructions and a picture of Udayana. The Magadha Princess is so much attracted by the beauty and loyalty of the king, that she leaves the palace and all its luxuries to take up the life of an ascetic even as king Udayana, who turned an ascetic because he lost his beloved wife. The various incidents in the play differ from those described in the Svapnavāsavadatta, due to this difference in the characters, the back-ground and the temperament of the three main personages, specially Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī.

Though the name of the play is Tāpasavatsarāja, and it is justified by the king leading the life of an ascetic till the end of play, still, it is Vāsavadattā, and later on Padmāvatī, who lead the course of action. Both the queens love Udayana much more than their own lives. Both wish the best for him. But Padmāvatī, being younger and unmarried knows only the importance of love, and is ready to live or die for that love. Her love is sincere and independent of any reciprocal feelings. Of course, she would have

been very happy if she could hope to be accepted by Udayana with love. But, the fact that he could not find a place for her in his heart did not baffle her. She still loves him and follows his foot-steps. When she comes to know that her hopes could only be dupes, she decides to die, not because she resented his love for his dear Vāsavadattā, but because she could not bear insult and indifference from him whom she loved so much. She would have succeeded in her attempt if not for the timely arrival of the king on the spot, due to the persuasions of his friend Vasantaka. It is this crisis that finally brings about his marriage with Padmāvatī in a hurry, which takes place in the hermitage under the supervision of Sāṅkrtyāyani. King Darśaka and others are away at Kauśāmbī at that time, fighting with Aruṇī. Padmāvatī is aware of the deep-rooted love of Udayana for Vāsavadattā. As she herself says, it is this loyalty and devotion to his former wife that attracted her so much !¹ This insistence of getting him as husband inspite of the knowledge she had about his irrevocable love for Vāsavadattā seems rather strange. She loves him. She knows that he has no eye for anybody else except Vāsavadattā, who was dead according to the knowledge of both. Still she is insistent about getting him as her husband. This is an un-understandable psychology of a woman's heart, which perhaps Anaṅgahaṛṣa wanted to portray before the world. She is always yearning after a thing which she knows to be not easily obtainable ! Here is a vast difference between the Udayana and Padmāvatī depicted by Bhāsa, and the same characters shown by Anaṅgahaṛṣa. Udayana's love for Vāsavadattā is deep-rooted and he could never forget her. Still, in the Svapnavāsavadatta, he does not seem to be so forlorn and disheartened as to be always on the lookout for an opportunity to put an end to his life, as we see in the

1. पद्मावती—अहो ! स्थिरसौहृद एष इति, अत एव मे एतस्योपरि
अभिनिवेशः ।

Tāpasavatsrāja. In the former play, when the proposal from Darśaka came, offering the hand of his sister, the king gave his silent consent, considering the possible political gains of such an alliance. But the Vatsarāja of this latter play, who took to the ascetic life because he could not commit suicide due to the constant watchfulness of his loyal ministers, would not even hear of looking at the beautiful Princess though he had enough evidence of her deep-rooted love. The friends and well-wishers of Udayana had to invent all sorts of stories to lead him on to the hermitage where Padmāvatī was leading the life of austerity, worshipping his portrait.

Of all the stories told, the most important is that Vatsarāja would meet with Vāsavadattā only after marrying a Princess, similar to her in all things. It is this fake prophecy of one of the followers of Yaugandharāyaṇa that finally made the king accept the hand of Padmāvatī. Even then, he would do so only at the last moment when he was suddenly faced with Padmāvatī's attempt to commit suicide. The one redeeming feature, in the whole happening is that the actions of Padmāvatī and Vatsarāja were both genuine and they were equally ignorant about the conspiracy that was being hatched round them for the sake of Udayana's reinstatement on the throne of Kauśāmbī.

While Padmāvatī's actions are all motivated by her deep love for Udayana and the desire to become his wife, Vāsavadattā's actions are characterised by the desire of his welfare and glory. This is quite natural also because she is his wife and it is her duty to share his fate, good or bad, and also to see that he keeps to the right path. She loves him and he loves her. But, she also sees that his love for her was demoralising him, and he was losing his position, prestige and name because of his constant desire to be with her and to enjoy life. As a good wife, she saw her duty clearly. Of course, the path of duty was spread with too many thorns. It was not enough that she should bear the separation from her beloved husband, but she had also to live as a dependent on the future

co-wife and help in making him marry the woman. In this matter the Vāsavadattā of Bhāsa is more or less on the same level with the one portrayed by Anaṅgahaṛṣa. The difference lies in this that, in the work of Bhāsa, the planned conspiracy is known only to the ministers and the queen, but in this latter work the only people who do not know anything about it are the King and Padmāvati. The queen has the support of her father, all the ministers, Sāṅkṛtyāyanī, who was already her revered companion, and her friend Kānchanamāla. Even Vasantaka, the friend of the king is deep drowned in the plot. Vāsavadattā nobly accepts her cross for the sake of her husband, and carries out her part perfectly. Not even once does he betray any feeling of weakness or yield to any one in her solitudes for Udayana, unlike Bhāsa's Vāsavadattā who praises Udayana openly and rather over-enthusiastically.¹

But, once the end is achieved, and Padmāvati has become the wedded wife of Udayana, we find a great change in Vāsavadattā, which is quite contrary to the Vāsavadattā portrayed by Bhāsa. There, she continues to live with Padmāvati, loves her and awaits the return of Yaugandharāyaṇa for further action. But, in this later work, Vāsavadattā loses all self-control, and decides to burn herself to death. Her power of understanding, reason and logic seem to have deserted her at this juncture. The situation is saved only by the advent of the equally desperate Udayana who is also determined to burn himself to death, because he has no more hopes of meeting Vāsavadattā. At this moment we feel that, Bhāsa's Vāsavadattā is more sensible, noble and

1. अ. चेटी—मर्तुदारिके ! यदि स राजा विरूपो भवेत् ।

वासवदत्ता—नहि नहि । दर्शनीय एव ।

पद्मावती—आर्ये कथं त्वं जानासि ।

S. V. II. p. 14

आ. पद्मावती—यथा ममार्यपुत्रस्तथैवार्याया वासवदत्ताया इति ।

वासवदत्ता—अतोऽप्यधिकम् ।

S. V. IV. p. 24

understanding, whereas the Vāsavadattā portrayed by Anaṅgahr̥ṣa is more emotional and impulsive. She was prepared to do all that was necessary to save her husband and herself from the scandal and infamy—that, due to their infatuation for each other, they ruined not only themselves but also the kingdom and the people. She showed courage enough to do all that was necessary to wake up her husband to the situation and to his duties. But Udayana did not rise to the occasion at all. When he knew that his beloved wife was dead, he also wanted to die and escape. It is his relations, Pradyota and Darśaka, who go to the battle-field to help his ministers who were actually fighting not only against Aruṇi who was the enemy, but also against Udayana's own impulsiveness and despair grown out of his infatuation for Vāsavadattā. He loves Vāsavadattā, she and she alone matters to him. He does not show to Padmāvatī even the average *dākṣiṇya* that is the due of a wedded wife, though he was fully aware of her deep-rooted love for him. He does not care what happens to the new bride Padmāvatī, if he falls into the fire. He pities the plight of the poor Princess who loved him so much, but that realisation does not help kindle a love for her in his heart. Since many portions of the manuscript are lost, it is not possible to follow closely the course of action as visualised by the Poet. But this much is easily seen that, as far as Vāsavadattā and Udayana are concerned, they know and desire only the existence and company of each other. It does not matter to them what happens to others, however near and dear they may be to them. Vāsavadattā, in this case is slightly better. She remembers her duty till the goal is achieved. Padmāvatī seems here to be just a piece in the political game played by the ministers of Udayana. When the aims of the ministers are fulfilled and Vāsavadattā is recognised in the person of the Brāhmaṇi who was living with Padmāvatī all the time, and when all concerned are happy, the only question the king had to ask his newly wedded wife is, "You have not

in any way wronged the Queen?¹ To that she meekly answers, "Yes, my Lord ! Not knowing her identity, I addressed her as dear friend."² Though Padmāvati was quite a necessary help in regaining the kingdom she seems to be the least remembered character at the happy ending. And she is indeed great in that she understands the situation and accepts the inevitable in a dignified way.

Another female character brought before us in this play, is Sāṅkṛtyāyanī, the ascetic lady, whom once before also we saw as a good, learned and broad-hearted woman leading an ascetic life. She is the same here also. Though she falls into the category of the Parivrājikā of the Mālavikāgnimitra, and the Mālati-Mādhava, this lady, as portrayed by Śrī Harṣa, did not disgrace the orange-garb she had taken by tying herself up with the desires of the mundane world. Where she finds that her idea might not be accepted, she coolly withdraws and minds her own business, as we have already noticed.³ The Sāṅkṛtyāyanī in this play, is the same as her prototype, as far as her ideals go. She realises that constant contact with worldly people is always harmful for the ascetic⁴, as she knows from her own experience. But though she is leading the life of renunciation, she has to interfere in the matters of the world because of her gratitude towards the king of the Vatsas who had helped her in time of need. She is not a passive witness or a hidden help. She takes an active part in carrying out the plans of Yaugandharāyaṇa. She actually takes the portrait of Udayana

1. राजा — पद्मावती ! किञ्चित्त्वयापराद्धं न देव्याः ।

2. पद्मावती — आर्यपुत्र ! अस्ति ममापराधः, यन्मया अज्ञानन्त्या प्रियसखीति आलपिता ।

Ta. V. VI. p. 74

3. See p. 192 *supra*.

4. साङ्कृत्यायनी — अभ्युद्यतानां श्रेयोऽर्थमपि मूलफलाशिनाम् ।

गृहिभिस्सह साङ्गत्यमन्तरायो विरागिणाम् ॥

Ta. V. III. 4

to Padmāvatī and it is she who was responsible for creating such deep love for Vatsarāja in the heart of the Princess. Though we are told that she is a Parivrājikā, in all reality, she is a veritable *Pīṭha-mardika* as far as Padmāvatī is concerned. Her affection for Vāsavadattā also is quite obvious.

All the characters in this play seem to be pieces of chess, played very carefully by the minister for the success of Udayana, each move being cleverly planned out beforehand. Still they have their own individualities. Anaṅga-harṣa seems to have before him the ideal, as set up by Bhāsa. He saw the greatness of Vāsavadattā's sacrifice and the nobility of Padmāvatī as shown in the *Svapnavāsavadatta*. But, when he himself sets out to portray the incidents referred to in that play, Udayana, Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī seem to have undergone a great change. Padmāvatī and Vāsavadattā seem to be two types representing the ideals of conjugal love. In the case of Vāsavadattā, it is love that bears not even a minute's separation. The king, true to his nature, completely ignores his duties to all others and merges himself in the company of the Queen. But, Vāsavadattā could not, for long, be blind to the destruction that was happening around. So, she is prepared to make the supreme sacrifice for the sake of her husband. She realises the dictum that fame is the greatest thing for noble people and duty towards the kingdom should count first with the king.

Though Udayana is the hero of the play, it is really Yaugandharāyaṇa's hands that direct the actions and incidents everywhere. Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī are helping him, one consciously and the other completely unconscious of the part that she is made to play. Herein lies the difference between the two queens. Padmāvatī is a simple, trusting and noble princess. It was very easy to fill her innocent and romantic heart with admiration for a handsome king who is well-known for his prowess and also for his staunch devotion to his beloved. The story of Udayana's

marriage with Vāsavadattā must have made quite a hubbub in the royal circles of that age. It was only natural that young maidens with romantic turn of minds were attracted towards such young men. And with Sāṅkṛtyāyanī's maneuvering, the flame of love was kindled in the heart of Padmāvatī. The true and noble woman that she was, her love was firm, whether it was reciprocated or not. That is what is proved by Anaṅgahaṛṣa in this portrayal of Padmāvatī. The moment Padmāvatī chose Udayana as her husband Yaugandharāyaṇa's aim of getting Darśaka's help for Udayana, was achieved. But Udayana's heart was gone with Vāsavadattā, and nothing could bring it back to normal conditions. Padmāvatī, portrayed by Bhāsa, did not have this difficulty to face. Though Udayana was extremely devoted to Vāsavadattā and was still in agonies due to her separation, he had not forgotten his chivalry as a gentleman and duty as a husband. Knowing his own precarious position, he gracefully accepted the hand of Padmāvatī, when offered by her brother, and thereafter treated her as her position and love deserved. But the picture in Tāpasavatsarāja is quite different. Padmāvatī was accepted by Udayana under pressure from various quarters and specially because he was told by a fortune-teller that he would meet with his Queen again only after marrying another princess resembling her,¹ and such a resemblance was found in Padmāvatī. Even then, he gave his consent only at the last moment, just to save Padmāvatī from committing suicide.

Udayana was incessantly remembering Vāsavadattā

1. वसन्तकः—भो वयस्य किं न स्मरति भवान्, यत्तेन भगवता सिद्धेन भणितं यथा—'देवीसदृश्याः कन्यकायाः पाणिग्रहणं निर्वर्त्य देवीसमागमस्ते भविष्यति' इति ।

राजा—अनयैव दुराशया इमामीदृशीमवस्थां नीतोऽस्मि ।

and now loosing all hopes of ever obtaining her, because he feared that this second marriage would only estrange her even if she was alive, he was seeking an opportunity to burn himself to death. All the same, Padmāvati follows him like a shadow and tries to console him inspite of his indifference to her. She seems to be patience on a monument throughout the play and her love does not seek reciprocation. If Udayana would love her she would consider it as a blessing from God. Her love is unconditional and constant. This idea rouses admiration in our minds, and by contrast, Padmāvati rises in our estimation. Though Vāsavadattā has shown her nobility and selflessness by voluntarily separating from her husband, she could not bear the idea of having a co-wife. She had had enough proof of the king's constant and deep-rooted love. She knew the real condition of the king. Still she was unable to bear the idea of having another woman who could claim a share of her husband's love, irrespective of the fact whether she got it or not. Here it is that Vāsavadattā fails in the idealism whereas Padmāvati wins.

By showing these types of ideals Anaṅgahaṛṣa was perhaps trying to hold up the status of women, which was not so high, as could be seen from the other plays belonging to this period. In most of them women are depicted as companions in gaiety and pleasures of conjugal love. Even in the Kaumudīmahotsava which is written by a woman and which deals with a political theme, the woman does not rise above these heights. The two Udayana plays written by Śrī Haṛṣa had reduced vāsavadattā to the status of a jealous, haughty and proud chief Queen. And Padmāvati appears to have fallen to the ordinary grade of the numerous queens that filled the harem of Udayana. But these two Queens are portrayed quite differently by Anaṅgahaṛṣa. He does not seem to be drawing upon what he actually saw; may be, that his imagination is working on the lines which he would

like women to follow and, of the two, the ideal of Padmāvati's self-dedication seems to appeal to the poet more.

The other women characters, even the maids-in-attendance, Kanchanamālā and Kośalikā, show a culture much above that of the ordinary level, when compared to the characters of the same status, depicted in the other plays of this period. Altogether the play seems to be a stray attempt at upholding the greatness of women at a time when they were pushed very much to the back-ground. The position of women in society on the basis of education, religion and other things is not very clear. But the fact that Darśaka is prepared to go to war with Āruṇi for the sake of Udayana, because the latter has been chosen by his sister, is quite significant. It is a proof that the happiness and welfare of his sister is of much importance to him—the brother. So also, because Udayana is his son-in-law, Pradyota is interested in his welfare and is prepared to fall in with all the suggestions of Yaugandharāyaṇa to see him back on the throne. This also points towards the fact that the daughters' welfare is important to the fathers as that of their sons. Whether this was the true situation at that time or not ; we cannot say. But Anaṅgahaṛṣa wished it to be so, and he imagined and portrayed a society which thus held together for the welfare of one another, with friends working for the good of friends, servants dedicating themselves to the welfare of the masters, wives sacrificing their everything for their husbands and the husbands considering their wives as the most cherished treasures of their own lives.

How far the contemporary society liked this picture, one has no means to know. Only one single copy of the manuscript survives, which is kept in Berlin, and that also is full of errors. In spite of the various quotations from this work by different authors on rhetorics, there is no source available at present to trace the original.

The literary merit of this work is unchallengeable.

Ideals upheld by it are quite noble and elevating. Characters and incidents described are worthy of appreciation, to say the least. Still, it fell out of circulation and finally got lost even as many other works. Has not this fact its own story to tell? Perhaps, the very idea that such a high and mighty king should be loyal and devoted to his wife, however good or noble she might be, revolted the people who could not imagine that women could be respected and adored. As a piece of art, it might have interested a few, while the rest became indifferent to this play in which ideals held ground than reality. In the modern days also, we do not lack examples where the ordinary incidents in the everyday life become more and more popular, while the idealistic or serious themes fall out of favour very easily with the general public. Human nature being similar, irrespective of time or place, we may not be far wrong in concluding that the reason of *Tāpasavatsarāja* being ignored by the men in general may be that the ideals upheld by the author were not quite palatable to the contemporary society or they were quite out-of-date to arouse any appreciation. However, it cannot be gainsaid that the women as seen through the eyes of *Anaṅgahaṛṣa* were noble and worthy of respect and admiration.

Draupadī, the queen of the *Pāṇḍavas*, is brought on the stage as the heroine of a play, for the first time, in this era. *Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa*, the author of the *Veṇīsamhāra*, seems to be a free spirit with a special inclination towards the heroic and the terrific sentiments with all their paraphernalia. This turn of his mind is manifested not only by the choice of the theme, but of the heroine also. As the very name suggests, this play centres round the tying of the hair of *Draupadī*, which was let loose years ago by *Duśśāsana* at the instigation of his elder brother. Though *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* were equally popular throughout the ages, the latter did not attract many poets as a source for

their writings, because perhaps it was more history than poetry, and more realistic than idealistic in nature. In the period we have already covered, only Bhāsa, one of the earliest poets, cared to draw upon the incidents of Mahābhārata for his dramatic works. Even he did not bring Draupadī on the stage in any of his plays. The concept of women is generally characterised by all that is beautiful, peaceful, calm and cool. Draupadī, the offspring of the sacrificial fire, did not appeal to the poetic talents till this period. But now came a poet who dared to put this heroic queen with a fiery and revengeful spirit, in the leading role of his drama. The story concerns with the days of battle, beginning from the return of Śrī Kṛṣṇa from the capital. The very nature of the play allows little scope for women characters. Still Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa has introduced three main characters—Draupadī, Bhānumatī and Gāndhārī. Also, there are Duśśalā and her mother-in-law, apart from the few maids-in-attendance. The scene of actions changes from one camp to another and finally the play ends with the fulfilment of Bhīmasena's vow, taken at the beginning of the first act.¹

The play begins with the vow of Bhīma to Draupadī and ends with its fulfilment. In this way, Draupadī is the heroine of the play. She is a unique figure in the whole of the Sanskrit dramatic literature. According to the general conception, and also the dramaturgists, the woman is supposed to be the representative of all that is gentle, beautiful and attractive. She is concerned as the charming counterpart of man. In the Nāṭyaśāstra and the later works on dramaturgy, the heroes and heroines are described and

1. भीमसेनः — चञ्चद्भुजभ्रमितचण्डगदाभिघात-

संचूर्णितोरुयुगलस्य सुयोधनस्य ।

स्त्यानावनदधनशोणितशोणपाणि-

रुत्तंसयिष्यति कचांस्तव देवि भीमः ॥

defined with the specific idea of conjugal relationship between the two. Though it is said by Bharata that the drama is intended to be the imitation of the world, and as such should be the imitation of the happenings of the world, the dramatist has been allowed to use his discretion as to what should be shown and what should not. So, in practice, generally the ennobling and good things are depicted; the Indian stage particularly limiting itself to the triumphs of good and noble lives. Of course, villains and their deeds do form a part of the play, but it is invariably to make the hero and his party shine by contrast, and to enhance the final happiness. Where women characters are concerned the Indian mind has always been a bit conservative. Only good, noble and cultured women are chosen as the heroines and they are portrayed as gentle, patient and submissive. The discussions and definitions of the heroines found in works of dramaturgy are suitable to this concept of women, as we have already seen in the first chapter of this treatise.¹

In dramas, heroines are generally divided into three kinds—Swiyā, Parakiyā and Sādhārāṇa, according to their relationship with the respective heroes. Each of these is again classified according to their nature. Draupadī being the wife of pāṇdavas belongs to the type called Swiyā and by nature she can be nothing else but Pragalbā. So far there is no discrepancy between the dramaturgists and Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa's portrayal. But when we come down to a close examination of the play, we find Draupadī as depicted in this drama to be standing out as a unique figure in the whole of Sanskrit dramatic literature. The Venī-samhāra as we all know, is not a play with love as its theme. Nor can we designate it as a political play like the Mudrā-rākṣasa, nor it is a social play like the Cārudatta. This contains all the elements of all the above mentioned types combined, evenly or unevenly as the case may be. It is the story of the battle between the brother princes of the Kuru

family and it is hatred and self-pity that predominate in the actions of all characters. Draupadī, the heroine, seems to lead in this characteristic. She enters the scene with tears streaming from her eyes, and her heart burning with anger and desire for revenge. Bhīmasena is already full of indignation at Yudhiṣṭhira's attempts for peace by sending Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Hastināpura. He is for once ready to get out of control and go against the wishes of his venerable elder brother and says: "For one day you are not my elder, nor am I submissive to you".¹

Sahadeva's fear that the advent of Draupadī would only enhance the anger of Bhīmasena,² seems to be a key to the nature of Draupadī in this drama. In fact it is she who kindles the fire of anger in Bhīma almost at every step. She seems to be an ordinary woman furious at the insults she had to suffer at the hands of the enemies and longing for revenge. Mercy and forgiveness do not characterise her words or activities. She comes to the stage only twice—in the first and last acts. In the first act she appears with her long hair loose with complaints of more insults from the wife of Duryodhana. In the last act she appears along with Yudhiṣṭhira where Bhīmasena comes after killing Duryodhana and fulfills the vow he had taken by tying the hair of Draupadī with his blood-stained hands. In the first act she appears to be boiling with the desire for revenge. She is angry with all the Pāṇdavas except Bhīma, because

1. भीमसेनः—युष्मच्छासनलङ्घनांहसि मया मग्नेन नामस्थितं
प्राप्ता नाम विगर्हणा स्थितिमतां मध्येऽनुजानामपि ।
क्रोधोल्लासितशोणितारुणगदस्योच्छिन्दतः कौरवा-
नद्यैकं दिवसं ममासि न गुरुर्नाहं विधेयस्तव ॥

V. S. I. 12

2. सहदेवः—यद्वैद्युतमिव ज्योतिरार्यं क्रुद्धेऽद्य संभृतम् ।
तत् प्रावृडिव कृष्णेयं नूनं संवर्धयिष्यति ॥

V. S. I. 14

of their passive attitudes. She adores Bhīmasena because her feelings find an affinity only in his thoughts, words and deeds. When finally she becomes sure that the battle would take place, only then, does she speak a few words which show the natural feelings a loving wife should have at such a time. Bhīmasena in his anger says: "You will not see Vṛkodara again with face clouded by shame due to the unrevenged insults from enemies endured, and before the Kauravas are completely destroyed".¹ Here she requests that he should take care of himself and come back safe.²

In the last scene, Draupadī appears once more. We find a slight difference in her behaviour here. She has seen the death of her children, of the near and dear relations, and is in constant fear of hearing bad news about her dear husband Bhīma, who was the only one to fulfill all her desires. These sorrows seem to have calmed her down. Though Draupadī has been brought on the stage as the heroine, the picture is neither an ennobling one nor elevating.

The Draupadī that we envisage in the epic and the heroine presented before us by Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa seem to be very different from each other. In the Mahābhārata, the queen of the Pāṇavas shows an individuality the distinguishing characteristics of which are pride and quick resentment of insults and injuries. These common characteristics help us to identify the queen in the Veṇīsamhāra also. But, the similarity ends there. She is the central figure around which the main story of the epic evolves. There, she depicts the

1. भीमसेनः—भूयः परिभवक्षान्तिलज्जाविधुरिताननम् ।

अग्निः शेषतकौरव्यं न पश्यसि वृकोदरम् ॥ V. S. I. 26

2. द्रौपदी—नाथ, मा खलु याज्ञसेनीपरिभवोद्दीपितकोपानला अनवेक्षितशरीराः
संचरिष्यथ । यतोऽप्रमत्तसंचरणीयानि रिपुबलानि श्रूयन्ते ।

V. S. I. p. 24

admirable type of courageous fidelity personified as a wife. She is the ideal mistress of the household whether in the palace or in the forest. She performed her duties perfectly well, irrespective of places or circumstances. She was the mistress of the house with mercy and solicitude for the poor and distressed, as the prominent traits of her character. Duryodhana himself, who was full of complaints against everyone of the Pāṇdavas, while talking about the *Rājasūya* testifies to the fact that Draupadī had supervised to the feeding of all alike, from the highest to the lowest, herself remaining without food till everybody was fed and satisfied.

Trials were not wanting in her life. But she stood them all bravely showing patience and perseverance. At the same time, unlike Sītā, she continued to keep the fire of revenge burning in her heart till the proper time came. The thirteenth year of their exile was the worst period for the Pāṇdavas; much more so for their proud queen. Yudhiṣṭhira was very much perturbed, because he did not know what to do about their wife who deserved to be maintained like a mother and honoured like an elder sister¹. It was Draupadī herself who came forward to solve the situation by volunteering to accept the position of a maid-servant in the harem of the queen of Virāṭa. All the same, she would not submit to insult and suffer disgrace silently. Jayadratha, Kīcaka, Duśśāsana and Duryodhana himself had to pay with their livēs for provoking this patient and loving daughter of fire.

Her knowledge and wisdom are manifest in many contexts. Her question to the elders of the Kaurava court, and her denunciation of the Virāṭa King are two relevant examples. The influence, her master-mind exercised over the Pāṇdavas and their policy, is obvious at every step in the epic.

1. इयं तु नः प्रिया भार्या प्राणेभ्योऽपि गरीयसी ।

मातेव परिपाल्या च पूज्या ज्येष्ठा स्वसैव च ॥ Ma. Bh. IV. 4. 22

But these ennobling qualities do not find a place in the play under consideration. Here, only one side, rather the hard side of her nature, is portrayed. When the Rākṣasa in disguise announces the death of Bhīma and Arjuna, of course, a glimpse of her softness is found. She along with Yudhiṣṭhira decides to enter the fire and would have done it, if not for the timely arrival of Bhīma.

Bhānumatī, the wife of Duryodhana is another female character presented in the *Veṇīsaṃhāra*. She belongs to the *Swadhīnā Patikā* and *Swiyā* type of heroine. Her love for Duryodhana is so great that she sees nothing wrong in any of his deeds. Her picture is that of a true *pativrata*, always intent on the happiness and welfare of her husband alone. Those who are loved by her husband are loved by her. Those who are hated by him are hated by her also. We are told in the first act that, just as any other ordinary woman, Bhānumatī insulted Draupadī by asking her pointedly why she still let her hair loose, since Yudhiṣṭhira was prepared to make peace even by getting only five villages.¹ But this is the only place where we see her meanness. In general, she appears to be a good woman and there is nothing to mark her out as specially noteworthy. She is a type of the ordinary woman belonging to aristocratic families, minding her own business and attending to her own life inside the harem. Her husband is her all in all, and she leads a life of peace and comfort. She believes in good and bad omens. She is very much agitated at the bad dream she had in which she saw a hundred snakes being killed and her own upper garment removed by a mongoose. She tries to propitiate the gods by worship and prayers. At the same time, she is very easily persuaded to leave these by her haughty husband. All her ideas of good and bad are just according to the sweet will and pleasure

1. चेटी—अयि ! याज्ञसेनी ! पञ्चग्रामाः प्रार्थ्यन्त इति श्रूयते । तत् कस्मादि-
दानीमपि ते केशा न संयम्यन्ते ।

of her husband. When he is informed that, Bhānumatī is undergoing fasts and vows for the victory of her husband, the chamberlaine remarks to himself, "Good, oh ! noble lady ! good ! Even though you are a woman, you are far better than His Majesty the King who, inspite of the fact that the enemies are acting with the help of Lord Kṛṣṇa, is still eager to go and enjoy in the harem.¹ The comparison and the comment are only too correct. That was no time for enjoyment for any heroic king. The battle was raging fiercely, and one by one his own faithful leaders were being killed. But the haughty and fool-hardy Duryodhana refuses to acknowledge the situation. Even though a woman, Bhānumatī sees the point more clearly and tries her best to propitiate the gods in favour of the King. Really, she is much better than her husband, as we could see within the few minutes we are able to see them together.

Bhānumatī is only mentioned in the Mahābhārata. The characteristics attributed to this queen therefore, arise from Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa's own imagination. So, there may not be anything wrong in concluding that she was a character drawn from the society as visualised by the author, and it is representative of the character of women in the royal families of his time.

Duśśalā, the sister of Duryodhana, and her mother-in-law are the two other female characters portrayed by Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa. They enter the presence of Duryodhana to tell him about the danger that was engulfing Jayadratha, because of Arjuna's vow to kill him before sunset. Both of them are frightened and are full of apprehensions about the life of Jayadratha. Duryodhana just laughs over their fears

3. कञ्चुकी—साधु पतिव्रते ! साधु ! स्त्रीभावेऽपि वर्तमाना वरं भवती न
पुनर्महाराजः । योऽयमुद्यतेषु बलवत्सु अथवा किं बलवत्सु,
वासुदेवसहायेषु पाण्डुपुत्रेष्वरिष्वद्याप्यन्तःपुरविहारमुखमनु-
भवति ।

V. S. II. p. 27

and assures them that nothing could happen to his beloved and heroic brother-in-law !

Queen Gāndhārī is another character presented in this play.

The noblest and best of all women characters, portrayed in the Mahābhārata, is Gāndhārī. No shadow obscures her pure image. Her 'Sahadarmācharaṇa' goes to this extent that she closely bandages her eyes the moment she comes to know that she was betrothed to a blind prince of the Kuru family, because it was not right to enjoy the pleasures which her husband was unable to enjoy. She had one hundred sons to make her the mother of heroes, but none worthy of that mother who was really Virtue incarnate. Though very loving and understanding by nature, she never allowed her love and affection for her sons to get the better of her right judgement and wisdom. Her sons never failed to hear their mother's warning advices whenever they deviated from the path of righteousness. In the game of dice when Yudhiṣṭhira gambled away his everything, including brothers and wife, the whole Kaurava court rose in great jubilation. Even the old blind king joined in for a moment. But there was one soul in Hastināpura at that time, who was terribly stricken with grief. Filled with apprehensions about the fruits of the wild oats her sons were sowing, she sternly ordered Duryodhana to retrace his steps. Once again when Duryodhana, drunk deep in his pride and avarice, dared to insult Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the universe, it was the grave and firm voice of Gāndhārī that rose in protest to warn her erring sons, though to no avail. Duryodhana, guided by his evil geniuses Karna and Śakuni, would not listen to his wise mother, who again and again warned him that the wages of sin will be death. Still he was fully aware of the greatness of his mother. His one desire was always to get her blessings before he entered the battlefield everyday. But, the only words the sad Queen could utter in answer to the supplications of her son were : "My son !

where there is virtue, there is glory¹." Even Lord Kṛṣṇa had to submit to the powerful curse of this noble and virtuous woman, when in the agony of seeing her whole family destroyed, she blamed Kṛṣṇa for not avoiding it. She cursed him that his race also will be annihilated by internal conflict. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, omnipotent and omniscient though he was, accepted the curse as coming from the most virtuous woman of the Kuru race, thus recognising before the whole world the greatness of a simple woman, who was a real mother, loving, yet firm in her truthfulness, justice, piety and penance.

But, we do not find any trace of this character in the Gāndhārī depicted by Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa. Of course, she has blindfolded her eyes because her husband was blind. She is a very affectionate mother who is quite blind to the faults of her children. She has only one desire left that she must save the one son who is still alive. She is an ordinary woman who weeps, wails and pleads with her son to remain alive for her sake. She accompanies her husband, the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra, to the presence of Duryodhana who is miserable due to the death of all his brothers and also of Karna. They go to him with the idea of persuading him not to fight any more. In short, she seems to be a mere reflection of the many mothers seen in the everyday life.

Buddhimatikā, the maid-servant of Draupadī, and the friends of Bhānumatī are the other female characters in this play. All of them are the suitable attendants and companions to their respective mistresses. Buddhimatikā, appears only in the first act. She relates their first meeting with Bhānumatī to Bhīmasena. The way in which she narrates the whole incident gives us an insight into her character. She is fully aware of the feelings of her mistress. When Bhīmasena asked what was the Queen's answer to the insult by Bhānumatī, she spiritedly says, "Her Majesty need con-

1. यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः ।

descend to answer only if she did not have any servants¹." And then she tells the well-pleased Bhīmasena what she, as the servant of the mighty Queen, answered².

This incident and its narration give us an insight into the feelings of both the Pāṇḍava and the Kaurava families towards each other. The whole scene reflects the condition of the family-quarrel which had deteriorated to the low depth of meanness and cruelty.

There is nothing much to say about the two friends of the Queen Bhānumatī.

Observing these female characters as portrayed by Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa, we are not able to discover any elevating qualities in any of them. Of all, perhaps the best is Bhānumatī who impresses one with her devotion to her husband, her simplicity, her meek and submissive nature. While Duryodhana and Bhīma can be considered as equals in their cruelty, mutual hatred, haughtiness and pride, there is a big contrast between Bhānumatī and Draupadī. While Draupadī shows all the fiery revengefulness, Bhānumatī is a passive personality, who is satisfied with her life within the harem under the safe shelter given by her husband.

The general idea existent about women is not laudable. Women seem to be condemned as weak, helpless and foolish. The statement of the chamberlaine, "though she is a woman, the Queen is better than the King³", shows plainly that women were not counted high in any way. Talking about Bhānumatī, Sahadeva says that woman becomes similar to her husband by the constant companionship. After all even a sweet creeper that climbs on a

1. चेटी—कुमार, यदि परिजनहीना भवेत् तदा देवी भणति ।

2. चेटी—ततो मया भणितम् । अयि भानुमति युष्माकममुक्तेषु केशहस्तेषु
कथमस्माकं देव्याः केशाः संयम्यन्त इति । V. S. I. p. 18

3. स्त्रीस्वभावेऽपि वर्तमाना वरं भवती न पुनर्महाराजः ।

V. S. II, p. 27

poisonous tree acquires the power to cause unconsciousness.¹ Though Duśśalā enters the presence of her brother, the king, she only weeps and wails. The talk is done by the mother of Jayadratha. This perhaps indicates the custom that younger women should not talk before their mothers-in-law, brothers and other elders.

One thing is clear that, the womenfolk of the society visualised by Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa were not held in much respect by their men nor did they get any appreciation from the people in general. Their dependence on men seems to have become a foregone conclusion as we could see from the comparison of the same characters found in the plays of Bhāsa with those in the *Veṇīsamhāra* of Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa.

We do not have any information about the education of women during this period. The position of a wife was the most desirable thing for a woman. Widowhood was the worst luck that could happen to her. Draupadī does not want to live after her mighty husbands have been killed. She decides to enter the fire and thus follow them to the other world.² There are many references to the wife dying along with her husband in the course of the play.³

Fasts, worships and other vows were kept by women for the welfare of their husbands. It is believed that bad omens and inauspicious incidents being fore-runners of calamities, can be avoided by proper propitiations, oblations and sacrifices. We find Bhānumatī offering *Arghya* to the Sun and other gods. She is also observing some vows

1. सहदेवः — स्त्रीणां हि साहचर्याद् भवन्ति चेतांसि भर्तृसदृशानि ।

मधुरापि हि मूर्च्छयते विषवितपिसमाश्रिता बह्वी ॥

V. S. I. 10

2. *Veṇīsamhāra*. VI. p. 178

3. सुन्दरकः — हा अतिकरुणं खल्वत्र वर्तते । एषा वीरमाता समरविनिहतं पुत्रकं श्रुत्वा रक्तांशुकनिवसया समग्रभूषणया वच्चा सहानु-
म्रियते । साधु, वीरमातः साधु ।

V. S. IV. p. 102

and fasts for the welfare of her husband. His interference in the worship is taken as a bad omen by all who are present. It is only the confidence Bhānumatī had in her husband's prowess that gives her consolation. But there is an indication that these offerings and fasts were becoming more and more mechanical and superficial. The devotee herself was easily dissuaded by Duryodhana's playful words.

As we examine the arena of the Sanskrit dramatic literature, we are confronted with one peculiar thing that Rāmāyaṇa has served as a source-book to many dramatists, whereas Mahābhārata is left out almost by all except Bhāsa and Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa. In fact Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa was the one author who dared to bring Draupadī on the stage as the heroine of a play.

But there are many plays with Sītā as the heroine. Among them the Āścaryacūdāmaṇī by Śaktibhadra is quite note-worthy.

This play treats with the main incidents described in the Rāmāyaṇa beginning with the Śūrpaṇakhā episode and ending with the return of Rāma to Ayodhyā from Lankā.

Śūrpaṇakhā, Sītā and Mandodarī are the three female characters depicted in this play. Śaktibhadra has not deviated from the story in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa as found in the present day. The characters are more or less the same. Still it is possible to read in between the lines and see the change that has come over the attitude towards women in society. Also the natural tendency of the people to look down upon them, and to consider them more as liabilities than assets, is quite obvious.

The depiction of Śūrpaṇakhā in the play is true to the picture drawn by Vālmīki. She is portrayed as a free, independent, selfish and amorous woman. The beauty of the two Princes aroused her desire and she decides to satisfy herself some how.

She approaches Rāma with her request, and then goes to Lakṣmaṇa as directed by Rāma. After going to both by

turns and finding herself rejected, she is enraged and attacks them who dared to insult her and consequently becomes disfigured. She goes to Khara and Duṣaṇa with the story of her insult by the two young mortals, and gets them entangled in a battle with Rāma, which ends in the destruction of the whole lot of them. Then, with redoubled hatred and rage she goes to Rāvaṇa. So far, Śaktibhadra faithfully follows the story of the Rāmāyaṇa. In the third act, Lakṣmaṇa brings the ring, the crest-jewel and armour as presents from the sages of Daṇḍaka forest. These presents possess the power to ward off the *Māyā* of the Rākṣasas, and specially the ring and crest-jewel meant for Rāma and Sītā respectively had the power to reveal by touch a disguised Rākṣasa. This idea is also taken from the Rāmāyaṇa. But, the poetic imagination worked to the full in showing the power actually at work in the third and fourth acts. The method of carrying away Sītā is completely original in this play. Rāvaṇa assumes the guise of Rāma and accompanied by his charioteer in the guise of Lakṣmaṇa, makes Sītā enter the chariot of her own accord. The episode of Mārīca is the same as in the Rāmāyaṇa. In the meantime Śūrpaṇakhā takes the disguise of Sītā and delays Rāma on the way. And all these disguises are revealed when the real Rāma touches the false Sītā and the false Rāma touches the real Sītā. After she is recognised by Rāma, Śūrpaṇakhā does not appear on the stage. In the Rāmāyaṇa also, we do not hear of Śūrpaṇakhā's whereabouts, after Sītā was carried away by Rāvaṇa. The killing of Jaṭāyu by Rāvaṇa, and the following important incidents such as the killing of Bālī, the coronation of Sugrīva, Hanumān's success in finding Sītā, the battle and death of Rāvaṇa and Sītā's fire-ordeal, are all as found in the source-book itself.

In portraying the female characters, Śaktibhadra has not shown any difference between the Aryan and non-Aryan women as Bhavabhūti had done. Neither has he

tried to deviate from the trodden path. He has allowed his poetic imagination, not to take up any new track, but only to follow up and expand or develop the points which were already existent. This being the case, it is only natural that Śurpanakhā's picture is as repugnant and contemptible here as described in the Rāmāyaṇa. The word "unrestrained"¹ used for her by Rāma seems to describe her correctly.

Maṇḍodarī though belonging to the Rākṣasa race, her nobility, love, chastity and self-dedication to her husband are all ideal. There is no difference between this Maṇḍodarī and the one depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa. Similarly, Rāvaṇa's attitude towards her is also as it should be. Though he talks about abandoning her and the whole harem for the sake of Sītā², due respect and consideration is shown to her while she is before him. This picture of amicable conjugal life inspite of Rāvaṇa's distraction for women, shows the greatness of Maṇḍodarī. Here again, Śaktibhadra has upheld the ideal of the wife who loves and obeys her husband in all circumstances even though he is faithless and bad. Maṇḍodarī knows all the shortcomings of her husband, and all his good qualities. She accepts him as he is and loves him, and saves him even from himself as much as she can. She is not the woman who is drowned in self-pity and jealousy. She is a true and noble woman who has a clear understanding, self-sufficiency, broad-heartedness and real love for her husband. She shows sincere goodwill for all around her. She is neither an encumbrance, nor a trouble to her husband; but obviously an asset to him. He knows well that he can always come back to her for comfort and consolation. She is the ideal of an average wife for all times. She is neither a slave nor a down-trodden creature. She is simple, loving, obedient and humble. At the

1. रामः —ग्रनर्गलः स्त्रीजनः ।

A. Ch. II. p. 56

2. रावणः —देवि तव कारणात्सर्वमन्तःपुरं त्यजामि । A. Ch. V. p. 170

same time she has the strength of her deep love, and the courage of her convictions. And Rāvaṇa, the strong, cruel, indisciplined, but just king of Lankā knows the worth of his wife only too well. In spite of all the shortcomings of Rāvaṇa, his family-life seems to be a stronghold of love and peace due to his noble and balanced wife. In the present days, when women are in the clutches of the troubles and difficulties of changing times, a wife and mother like Maṇḍodarī is the ideal that can help. While both men and women are looking at each other with suspicion and fear, while each is trying to prove the inferiority of the other and gain superiority for self, it is the forbearance, patience, forgiving nature and tolerance of women like Maṇḍodarī that can solve the problems which invariably rise in the everyday life. Mandodarī, as described in the Rāmāyaṇa and portrayed by Śaktibhadra, is an ideal that can be easily followed by women in all positions, circumstances and conditions.

The main character, Sītā, is presented as a happy wife in company of her husband, as a woman terribly deceived by force of circumstances and the selfish Rākṣasa, as a captive of Rāvaṇa, and also as the wife who is condemned by her husband for no fault of hers. In all these situations, her simplicity, innocence, deep love for her husband, chastity and courage are exemplary. Her love and concern for her young brother-in-law, and also other family members are unmistakably clear in her various remarks. In the second act, when Śurpaṇakhā is sent back to Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā feels very bad and asks Rāma why he is treating her thus! Rāma's reply was that undisciplined women are not worthy to be kept in contact by people of good family¹. She asks immediately: "Then why have you sent such an untrustworthy woman

1. रामः—देवि न संसर्गमर्हति कुटुम्बिनाम् अनर्गलः स्त्रीजनः ।

to young Lakṣmaṇa ?”¹

This whole conversation points towards her innocent and trusting nature. Even after Śurpaṇakhā's true character and figure are revealed, she is worried about that beautiful woman wandering alone in the forest.² It seems rather difficult for her to believe that the beautiful woman was the same as the Rākṣasī. Her desire to possess the golden deer is prompted only by her natural attraction for beautiful things which is common in all human-beings, specially in those who love beauty. It is quite easy for Rāvaṇa and his charioteer, disguised as Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, to persuade her to get into the chariot with the story that Bharata is about to be attacked by enemies.³ Sītā readily agrees to the proposal to return home, because, as she admits, she will be happy to help Bharata and to fall at the feet of her elders.⁴ In her heart of hearts she preferred the simple forest-life to the showy and glamorous life at the palace. Her conscience is so clear that the coming events always cast their shadows and she feels depressed, even though there is no apparent cause.

The moment Rāvaṇa is revealed in his true form due to the power of the crest jewel “Chudāmaṇi”, she is beside herself with fear and cries for help. So far Sītā shows the gentle, timid and modest nature that characterises a high-born princess. But it is the last two acts that show a diffe-

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1. सीता—यद्येवमविश्वसनीयो जनः कस्य हेतोः कुमारस्य समीपे प्रेषितः ।

A. Ch. II. p. 56

2. सीता—अथवा इत्थं प्रतिभये राक्षसीभिर्वनप्रदेशे तथा लावण्यवती सुकुमार-
गात्रा सीमन्तिनी कथमिव वर्तते ।

A. Ch. p. 70

3. सूतः —आर्य ! समाधिचक्षुषा भरतस्य पश्चक्रभयमुपनतं दृष्ट्वा तूष्णीं युष्माभि-
रभिगन्तव्यमिति तपसा रथं निर्माय मह्यं दत्त्वा वनान्तरेष्वन्तर्हिता-
स्तपस्विजनः ।

A. Ch. III. p. 114

4. सीता—ननु मयाप्येष्टव्यो भरतस्य व्यसननाशो वन्दनं गुरुजनस्य च ।

A. Ch. III. p. 115

rent aspect of Sītā. Till then she is under the protection of her husband and there is nothing for her to fear; but now those happy days are gone and she has become a captive of the Rākṣasa king.

In this condition we see her in the *Aśokavāṭikā*, along with the coaxing Rāvaṇa. All the temptations he offered, all the terrors he subjected her to, do not have any effect on Sītā. Māṇḍodarī's heart is filled with admiration for the courage and greatness of Sītā, as is expressed in her words : "She is indeed courageous. She dares to move her feet away from the touch of the King's head, as if it were mud."¹ Māṇḍodarī's love for her husband alone saves Sītā from being killed by Rāvaṇa, for she comes in between and Rāvaṇa has to withdraw his "*Chandrahāsa*", and retire. Sītā having lost all hopes now decides to commit suicide. The attempt was thwarted only by the timely arrival of Hanumān with the ring and the message from Rāma. But the greatest trial is yet to come. The ocean is crossed, the battle is won and Rāvaṇa is killed; but Sītā is practically forgotten by Rāma. At last when Vibhīṣaṇa refuses to enter Lankā before Sītā is brought out from there, Rāma asks Sugrīva to bring her to his presence.² But neither Rāma nor Lakṣmaṇa seem to be over-anxious to accept her back. Rāma has his own doubts as to the propriety of the procedure,³ whereas Lakṣmaṇa actually advises Rāma to

1. मन्दोदरी—धीरा खल्वेषा, महाराजस्य शीर्षं पङ्कमिव पादेन परिहरति ।

A. Ch. V. p. 173

2. अ. सुग्रीवः—देव, इदं विभीषणवचनम् । अहं तावन्नगरीं न प्रविशामि
यावद्देवी ततो न निष्क्रामति ।

आ. रामः—(सबहुमानं) यद्येवं त्वमेव तव सखीमानय ।

A. Ch. VII. p. 211

3. रामः—(सवितर्कं)

हत्वा बालिनमर्णवे गिरिशतैराबध्य सेतुं श्रमा-

ल्लङ्कामेत्य सहायबन्धुसहितं कृत्वा हतं रावणम् ।

test her.¹

By the time Sītā reaches his presence, Rāma's whole attitude has changed. Sītā herself has her own misgivings as to how people will talk ! She knows that women are not considered trustworthy. She feels bad because it was due to her that Rāma had to face all these troubles.²

And to make things worse, the blessings given by Anasūyā that everything will turn into an adornment for Sītā in the presence of Rāma,³ which was unknown to Rāma, turned out to be a curse for her.⁴ Rāma had very proudly instructed Sugriva to bring Sītā openly, so that everyone might see her and realise how miserably she had been spending the period of separation.⁵ But what he saw was shockingly different from that which he had expected. His enraged

यामद्य प्रतिपालयामि वचनप्रामाण्यतो मास्तेः

संवासादपि नाम सा नृपसुता न स्यादवर्णास्पदम् ॥

A. Ch. VII. 11

1. लक्ष्मणः—प्रसीदत्वार्यः ।

सुखाभिलाषी स्त्रीभावो दुर्विनीताश्च राक्षसाः ।

दूरे वयमतो देव्याः परीक्षया भावशुद्धता ॥

A. Ch. VII. 12

2. सीताः—किन्तु खलु मां महाजनो मन्त्रयते । किन्तु खलु माम् आर्यपुत्रो मन्त्रयते । अविश्वसनीयः खलु स्त्री स्वभावः । अघन्याया मम कृते अनर्थसागरे पतित आर्यपुत्रः । A. Ch. VII. p. 215

3. सीताः—किन्तु खलु ; न जानात्यार्यपुत्रः ननु महर्षिपत्न्या अनसूयया आश्रमे मां विसर्जयन्त्या मे दत्तं वरं 'तव भर्तुर्दर्शनपथे सर्वं मण्डनं भविष्यतीति' । A. Ch. II. p. 58

4. सीता—हा धिक् अनसूयया अनुग्रहोऽपि मे इदानीं शापः संवृत्तः ।

A. Ch. VII. p. 216

5. रामः—अवधूय दशग्रीवं मामनुव्रतचेतसः ।

सर्वे पश्यन्तु जानक्या रूपं चारित्रभूषणम् ॥

A. Ch. VII. 14

question to Sugrīva, "Did you not see her before?"¹ has a world of meaning; and he adds a description of her appearance with an insinuation.² Little did he know then that it was the mud and dust on her body that appeared as sandal-wood paste to his eyes, the dry leaves of trees that seemed to be flowers and the torn and dirty clothes she was wearing all these days that appeared to be red silken garments; Sugrīva had to confess that it was because of his respectful attitude towards Sītā that Rāma had to see this,³ meaning thereby that if he had dared to look at her before, she would not have been allowed to come anywhere near Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān also feel scandalised and enraged at the beautiful and decorated appearance of Sītā, which to them was the greatest proof for Sītā's moral degradation! Little do they know that if they had looked at her in the absence of Rāma they could not have seen her in this attire at all. One and all—Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva and Hanumān insult her and would not allow her even to speak.

Rāma in his rage questions her right to stand before him and showers on her the worst of insults.⁴ The insinuation that she was keeping appointments with the Rākṣasas,

1. रामः—सुग्रीव पूर्वमियं न दृष्टा । A. Ch. VII. p. 216

2. रामः—सुग्रीव पश्येदानीं त्वयाऽदृष्टपूर्वं विरहचारित्रम् ।

हरिचन्दनप्रणयिनौ पयोधरौ

कुसुमाचितं सुरभि केशबन्धनम् ।

अरुणप्रभातिशयचोरमम्बरं

विरहव्रताय बहते पतिव्रता ॥ A. Ch. VII. 16

3. सुग्रीवः—ममात्याचारदोषादियं देवस्य नयनगोचरं प्राप्ता ।

A. Ch. VII. p. 216

4. रामः—इदानीमपि मम पुरतस्तिष्ठति ।

रजनीचरगूढसन्निभिः कृतसंकेतनया दिने दिने ।

ऋजुभावजडास्त्वया वयं ह्यलिताः पुञ्जलि दण्डके वने ॥

A. Ch. VII. 17

even in the Dandakāranya, shows how unreasonable and enraged Rāma had become. Of all present, Sītā alone stood calm and cool. She was sure of her pure and spotless character. She was indeed above suspicion. Still, the short-sightedness and suspicious nature of men would scandalise her. The worst of the situation was that her own husband, who ought to have known her better than any one else, was the first in accusing her. She smiles and says: "Even my Lord speaks harsh words."¹ Sugrīva wants to send her away from Rāma; but Lakṣmaṇa wishes to kill her. He remembered perhaps the last words spoken to him by Sītā in the forest, when he refused to leave her alone, to go and help Rāma. Hanumān waited only for the permission of Rāma to punish her as she deserved! That was the reception Sītā got after a year of long separation from her husband, which period she spent constantly uttering his name and bearing all miseries that were heaped upon her by the Rākṣasas, in the one hope of meeting the beloved husband once more. Disgraced and rejected, she stood alone in that crowd who, one and all, looked upon her as a reprehensible being. Still her courage was undaunted, self-confidence unshaken! She did not want to resort to futile words. Sugrīva's words here, are quite significant: "Hearing such words from her husband, she still smiles! Either, she is the worst of women, or the best indeed".² And Sītā proved herself to be the latter, by her actions, not words! She wants to enter fire with the permission of her husband. Lakṣmaṇa is pleased. He is only too ready to see her destroyed. Naturally enough, Rāma's inner conscience is not calm. The heart

1. सीता—(सस्मितम्) आर्यपुत्रेणापि पुरुषवचनं भण्यते।

A. Ch. VII. p. 218

2. सुग्रीवः—इदं श्रुत्वा वचो भर्तुर्यदेषा कुरुते स्मितम्।

तदियं सर्वनारीणामवरा वा वरा यदि॥

A. Ch. VII. 18

knows the language of heart. Hence he feels he will not be right in blaming *Sitā*, though there was clear evidence of her fault. The fire-ordeal is over; *Sitā*¹ comes out of it unscathed. The Gods, Sages and other divine beings stand witness to her purity and chastity. All are happy and as *Rāma* starts for *Ayodhyā* with the permission of all present, the drama comes to a close.

Śaktibhadra has elaborated and expounded the episode of *Sitā*'s fire-ordeal in the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* as it suited his own imagination.

Before going further, it is desirable to examine a few points that strike us in this play. We have already studied the plays by *Bhāsa* and *Bhavabhūti*, who have both treated the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. *Bhāsa*'s plays concerned the story only upto the return of *Rāma* to *Ayodhyā* after the killing of *Rāvaṇa*, while *Bhavabhūti* wrote a full play over the last phase of *Rāma*'s life, centering round the most important incident there. It is in his play, the *Uttara-Rāmacarita*, that we first hear of the fire-ordeal that *Sitā* had to undergo in *Lankā*, though we know about the same from the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself and the *Raghuvamśa* of *Kālidāsa*. And it is *Bhavabhūti* who dramatised the banishment of *Sitā* by *Rāma* due to the scandals that spread throughout *Ayodhyā*, because she had to dwell in *Lankā* away from her husband for about a year. None of the earlier dramatists had treated these incidents in the life of *Rāma* and *Sitā*, though all these are found elaborately in the *Rāmāyaṇa* available to us in the present day.

Scholars are of opinion that though *Rāmāyaṇa* was the source-book of all other literatures¹, the *Ādikāvya* was cons-

1. रामायणं महाकाव्यमादौ वाल्मीकिना कृतं ।

तन्मूलं सर्वकायानां इतिहासपुराणयोः ॥

संहितानां च सर्वासाम् मूलं रामायणं मतं ।

तदेवादृशमाराध्य वेदव्यासो हरेः कला ॥

चक्रे महाभारताख्यमितिहासं पुरातनम् ।

Br. D. P.

tituted of only the portion beginning from the Ayodhyākāṇḍa and ending in the Yuddhakāṇḍa. They think the Bālākāṇḍa and Uttarakāṇḍa to be later additions to the originals. There are scholars who are of opinion that even the fire-ordeal of Sītā in the Yuddhakāṇḍa is a later interpolation.¹

The story of Rāma in the Mahābhārata, Harivaṁśa, Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Vāyupurāṇa, Bhāgavata, Kathāsaritsāgara, Nṛsiṃha-Rāmāyaṇa, Tibbatī Rāmāyaṇa and many others do not have even a reference to this incident. Still, in the present play, it has been made an issue. We see, it is actually a reflection of that same portion in the Rāmāyaṇa, which, according to Camil Bulke, is a later addition. This may be a pointer towards the change of attitude towards women that has come in the society, and which was gaining ground gradually.

Throughout we have found Sītā as the noblest and most dignified of women. But, even she acts as a mere petty-minded person on two occasions. Once, when Lakṣmaṇa was in the clutches of Śūrpaṇakhā, and a second time when she heard the wailings of Mārīca in the guise of Rāma. At both these places, we miss the love, selflessness and self-confidence of the real Sītā. She would not allow Rāma to go and help Lakṣmaṇa. In despair, Rāma says, "Oh ! my lady, still you don't leave the womanly nature ?"² Her answer at this indignant statement is, "Who will protect me ?"³ When asked, who will save Lakṣmaṇa, she

1. A. Webber : On the Ramayana, p. 65

W. Prince : Jacob Memorial Volume p. 108

2. रामः—(सशोकं) देवि ! किमद्यापि स्त्री स्वभावं न मुञ्चसि ।

3. सीता—आर्यपुत्र को मां रक्षति ।

रामः—कुमारः केन रक्ष्यते ।

सीता—ननु तस्य हस्तगतमायुधम् ।

रामः—धिगहं मानुषं जन्म वसुधामात्रगोचरम् ।

राक्षसी लक्ष्मणं हृत्वा तिरोभूत्पश्यतो मम ॥

calmly answers, that he has got his weapons. Rāma had to curse his helplessness and keep her company.

This scene perhaps tells us more than what exactly the words mean. Similarly, the words of Sītā addressed to Lakṣmaṇa, "Only Goddess Lakṣmī follows the successors, Not I", when he refused to leave her alone, are quite unsuitable to their relationship with each other, and also the behaviour of Lakṣmaṇa, till then. Of course, this incident again has its parallel in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa¹, in a worse form. For, there, Sītā suspects not only Lakṣmaṇa, but even Bharata, who she says might have asked the former to take her back after his elder brother's death. That Śaktibhadra does not go to that extent, is a relief, however small it may be. These two incidents are black spots in the refreshingly noble character of Sītā, even in the source-book as we have it today.

Examining this play closely, we are able to see that Śaktibhadra is following a path of his own in dramatising the story of Rāmāyaṇa. He seems to follow the main incidents of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa with the intention of holding up certain ideals and making them shine by contrast. Śurpaṇakhā on one side, and Maṇḍodarī on the other, are a study in contrast by themselves. Though both of them belong to the royal family, Śurpaṇakhā's activities bring destruction not only to the whole family, but to the whole nation. Maṇḍodarī is the guardian-angel as it were of Rāvaṇa, and hence of the whole nation also. As long as Rāvaṇa listened to his noble wife, he was saved. The moment he lost control over himself due to his craving for sensual pleasure, roused by Śurpaṇakhā and became indifferent to his wife's good counsel, his fall began. This is the truth that is told in the Rāmāyaṇa, and Śaktibhadra made this quite clear to all by his clever development of the same incidents in his own way.

1. सीता—अनन्तरगामिनी स्त्रीणां लक्ष्मीः न खल्वहम् । A. Ch. III. p. 108

2. V. R. III. 45. 21-27

For example, though the Śurpaṇakhā episode in the first and second acts of the play, is the same as found in the various Rāmāyaṇas, the conversations between Lakṣmaṇa and Śurpaṇakhā in the first act, and that between Rāma and Sītā in the second, are pointers to the real nature of both the women. The mention of the three presents from the Sages, the Ring, the Crest-jewel and the Armour, is found in the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, and the author adopted it from there and expanded the same in such a way as to show how all served them in time of need ! Śurpaṇakhā's jealousy and revengefulness is portrayed clearly and through her, the power of women to influence others is held up.

Though Śaktibhadra has portrayed two very good women, and thus has raised them to a high standard, the general attitude of society towards women is in no way hidden in this work. No specific information is given about the position of women as it was. But, the idea that women are sources of evil and sorrow, seems to be predominant. The appearance of a beautiful woman wandering in the forest creates suspicion in the mind of Lakṣmaṇa. His idea is that wise people should not take special notice of women¹ and so he tries to ignore Śurpaṇakhā who approaches him as a very beautiful woman. As it is, Lakṣmaṇa seems to be more averse to women than anybody else in the whole play. He does not lose a single opportunity to denounce women. When Rāma feels thankful to Kaikeyī for that happy life they were enjoying in the forest, the dry answer of Lakṣmaṇa is "There is nothing bad in the eyes of good people."²

He is justified in getting annoyed with Sītā when she attributes to him evil intentions concerning her at the time

1. लक्ष्मणः — न समाधिः स्त्रीषु लोकज्ञः ।

A. Ch. I. p. 19

2. लक्ष्मणः — सत्यमाह लोकः 'न सन्त्यगुणा गुणवताम्' इति ।

A. Ch. I. p. 35

he was actually trying to save her from possible danger. But, his behaviour in the last act is quite unwarranted. This is the one place, throughout the Indian literature, where Lakṣmaṇa airs such opinions about Sītā. Everywhere else he has been pictured as the most affectionate and respectful younger brother-in-law. Rāma's attitude towards Sītā at Lankā after the killing of Rāvaṇa was not approved by any one, according to any Rāmāyaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, Hanumān, Vibhīṣaṇa were all sad and resentful, but kept quiet due to their devotion to Rāma. In the Abhiṣekanāṭaka, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān are sure of the purity, chastity and greatness of Sītā.¹ It is nowhere clearly stated why Rāma was angry when he saw Sītā. In the Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa, it is stated that seeing the form of the illusory Sītā created for the sake of deceiving Rāvaṇa, Rāma got angry and said unspeakable words to her.²

Two incidents which find importance in this play are the presentation of the ring, crest-jewel and armour by the sages, and the beauty of Sītā when she approached Rāma after the killing of Rāvaṇa. Both these are specially referred to in the Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa, whereas the remaining parts of the story are more or less common to all the Rāmāyaṇas. It is clearly stated that the poet hails from the south.³ And it is a well-known fact that Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa is more popular in the south than the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. So it is quite possible that Śaktibhadra based his drama on the book that was more familiar to him. However that may be, the development of the above referred incidents, which are the

1. लक्ष्मणः — भो ! कष्टम् ।

विज्ञाय देव्याः शौचं च श्रुत्वा चार्यस्य शासनम् । Ab. N. VI. p. 367

2. रामोऽपि दृष्ट्वा तां मायासीतां कार्यार्थनिर्मिताम् ।

श्रवाच्यवादान्वहुशः प्राह तां रघुनन्दनः । Ad. R. VI. 12. 75-76

3. सूत्रधारः — आर्ये दक्षिणापथादागतमाश्रयचूडामणि नाम नाटकमभिनया-
श्रेष्ठितसौभाग्यमभिलषाम इत्यार्यमिश्रणां शासनम् । A. Ch. I. p. 7

specialities of the Āścaryacūdāmaṇi, give an insight into the attitude of the people towards women. In short, women were looked upon as untrustworthy, weak, easily moved and fickle. Hence, even Sītā was made a victim to the worst possible insults. Even Lakṣmaṇa thinks that she should be tested.

In an earlier drama dealing with the same incident, we have already heard Lakṣmaṇa saying, "Having known the pure and chaste character of Sītā and hearing my Lord's order, my intellect is swinging as though placed on a swing between duty and love."¹ Hanumān is equally helpless there. The same Lakṣmaṇa, now in this play, seems only too happy to lead Sītā on to the fire-ordeal. He actually says so.² This difference can only be due to the strict vigilance on and easy suspicion of women that came into vogue in the later period. Of course this attitude of people in general has changed the situation. But the ideal remains the same. Sītā's words and deeds are unchanged from the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa till the time of the present play. She is above all conditions, situations and circumstances. This is what Śaktibhadra seeks to tell us, that, while Mandodarī and Śūrpanakhā are the two opposite types of the ordinary daily life, Sītā is the ideal that keeps the head of Indian womanhood quite high above all the world. Her character is not a thing of this world. It is divine, brilliant and inimitable. She is not devoid of short-comings in the ordinary life. She can succumb to desire, misunderstanding and anger but at the time of tests, she is the gem, the crest-jewel of all women that would shine at the top of all, an ideal for all times, to all people. And that is how Śaktibhadra has portrayed her.

1. लक्ष्मणः—विज्ञाय देव्याः शौचं च श्रुत्वा चार्यस्य शासनम् ।

धर्मस्नेहान्तरे न्यस्ता बुद्धिर्दोलायते मम ॥

Ab. N. VI. 23

2. लक्ष्मणः—(आत्मगतं) इदानीं प्रीतोऽस्मि ।

A. Ch. VII. p. 219

Though there are a few Rākṣasīs and maid-servants of the palace in Lankā, they are just the ordinary types, common in the harem of any great king.

There are many other plays based on the story of the Rāmāyaṇa. Abhinavagupta and Kuntaka cite many plays, such as the Chhalita Rāma, the Maya Puspaka and the Krityā Rāvaṇa.¹ Later on, there are others that add to the number, such as the Rāmābhyudaya, the Udaya-Rāghava, the Unmatta-Rāghava, the Jānakī-Parīṇaya, the Anargha-Rāghava, the Prasanna-Rāghava, the Bāla-Rāmāyaṇa, the Maithilī-Parīṇaya and others. Of these many are known to us only by names and those which are published do not show any special merits. Even those plays written by Mitrā, Rājasekhara and Jayadeva, are of ordinary types, as far as the dramatic art is concerned and they have followed only the traditional story as has been treated by previous writers, especially Vālmīki, and then Bhavabhūti. Women characters are few in number and they are not much different from those whom we have already studied. In the Anargha Rāghava of Murāri, the Bāla-Rāmāyaṇa of Rājasekhara and the Prasanna-Rāghava of Jayadeva, it is very easy to see the influence of the Mahāvīracarita, and the women characters also show more or less the same traits.

Murāri is approximately assigned to the last part of the ninth century or the beginning of the 10th century A.D.² His play Anargha-Rāghava deals with the story of Rāma till his coronation at Ayodhyā after the killing of Rāvaṇa. Śūrpaṇakhā, Śramaṇā and Sītā are the only women characters in the Anargha-Rāghava. The story is not changed in the main outlines. But the causes for some of the incidents within the story have been changed from the original. Even here, the changes are more or less on the same lines as found in the Mahāvīracarita of Bhavabhūti. The characterisation of Śūrpaṇakhā and Śramaṇā are relevant exam-

1. History of Sanskrit literature—De & Das Gupta, p. 48

ples. The words of Mālyavān to Śūrpaṇakhā in the fourth act present a partial repetition, either in words¹ or in ideas.² Śūrpaṇakhā and Śramaṇā are both working as political spies on the kings of Ayodhyā and Mithilā. What Śūrpaṇakhā was asked to do in the Mahāvīracarita is done by Śramaṇā in the Anargha-Rāghava. And the cause here is Jambhavān's desire to get Rāma near Kiṣkindhā to cause the death of Bālī. Even this idea has its seed in the words of Mālyavān to Śūrpaṇakhā in the Mahāvīracarita.

The whole plot was discussed by Mālyavān with Śūrpaṇakhā and the pros and cons were explained to her. There the question of killing Rāma by Bālī was also contemplated, when Śūrpaṇakhā shrewdly pointed out that if Rāma, the conqueror of the great Paraśurāma kills Bālī also, all their plans would fail. There, Śramaṇā was sent by Vibhiṣaṇa to Sugrīva, with the message about Rāma being near the Rṣyamūka mountains. These two are combined and arranged in a different way by Murāri. Here it is Śramaṇā who enters the body of Mantharā and manages Rāma's exile. The purpose is to help Sugrīva against Bālī, and the person behind this plan is Jambhavān and not Mālyavān. However that may be, the fact remains that the women belonging to the Dravidian races are depicted in this play also in an equal position with men, even in the political arena. Although it is only an imitation of Bhavabhūti, still we will have to accept that Murāri was not afraid of the audience who witnessed that play and who might get shocked if those women were to appear thus on the stage. But it is very significant that though Sitā is the heroine of the play, she comes on the stage only in the last act when she returns home with her husband. It is stated that she was

1. माल्यवान्—रावणप्रियांसि वत्से, कार्यज्ञा च ।

M. V. Ch. IV. p. 90

2. माल्यवान्—शृगु वत्से, कार्यज्ञासि ।

An. R. IV. p. 190

accepted by Rāma after the fire-ordeal.¹

Sītā is the only Āryan woman depicted in this play, and the little that we see of her does not enable us to make an estimate of the position of women in general. Sītā is entertained by Rāma by describing to her the various places they come across on their return journey from Lankā to Ayodhyā. We are not able to discern much from these passages except the respectful and loving regard that Rāma shows to Sītā.

Though the whole story of the Rāmāyaṇa is dramatised, we are not able to find anything special about the women characters depicted there because of the general imitative nature of the play.

The story of Sītā is once again taken up for dramatisation by another famous poet, Rājaśekhara who proclaims himself to be the incarnation of Vālmiki. In the Prastāvana of this play, namely, the Bālarāmāyaṇa, the Sūtradhāra says, "He who was Vālmiki in the ancient days, he who then became Bhartṛmēḍha and afterwards was born as Bhavabhūti now exists as Rājaśekhara."²

Perhaps, by this claim, he is justifying his act of imitating those earlier poets as it suited him. The story itself has been reconstructed by him following Bhavabhūti's Mahāvīracarita. Unlike Vālmiki, Bhavabhūti and the later poets have made Rāvaṇa's desire to marry Sītā, the main cause of his enmity towards Rāma.

1. (नेपथ्ये) तमिस्रामूर्च्छालिजगदगदंकारकिरणे

रघुणां गोत्रस्य प्रसवितरि देवे सवितरि ।

पुरस्थे दिक्पालैः सह परगृहावासवचना—

त्प्रविष्टा वैदेही दहनमथ शुद्धा च निरगात् ॥ An. R. VII 1

2. सूत्रधारः—बभूव वल्मीकभवः कविः पुरा

ततः प्रपेदे भुवि भर्तृमेण्डताम् ।

स्थितः पुनर्यो भवभूतिरेखया

स वर्तते सम्प्रति राजशेखरः ॥ Bā. R. I. 16

Murāri, of course, mentions this as the motive for Rāvaṇa, though it is made clear only through the entrance of the messenger of Rāma in the second act and the discussion of Śūrpaṇakhā and Mālyavān in the third act. But Rājāśekhara has made this the very seed of the whole play, and brings in Rāvaṇa on the stage as the suitor of Sītā's hand in the first act itself. The theme is developed in the same way as in the works of Bhavabhūti and Murāri with minor deviations in the details. This again seems to be less of a drama and more of a literary piece.

Sītā, her friends, Śūrpaṇakhā, the three queens, the Rivers Gangā and Yamunā, Trijaṭā, Chāraṇī, Alakā and Lankā are the female characters presented in the play. As the main outline of the story is the same as in the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, the characterisation of the Āryan race is not different from that of the original work. Sītā is the faithful, obedient and loving wife. Kauśalyā, Kaikeyī and Sumitrā, the queens of Daśaratha, are also depicted as dutiful. The Rivers Gangā and Yamunā are as divine as they should be. Kaikeyī who is denounced as the cause of Rama's exile in the Rāmāyaṇa is completely redeemed here. Of course Bhavabhūti in his Mahāvīracarita, made the conspiracy of Mālyavān, the cause of this for the first time and Murāri followed up, though with a little deviation. But Rājāśekhara made quite a dramatic turn by making Śūrpaṇakhā and Mālyavān take the guise of Kaikeyī and Daśaratha respectively, and manage the exile of Rāma.

Both the king and the queen were away to help Indra against the Asuras, and this opportunity was taken by the deceivers to achieve their ends. Thus Kaikeyī does not even know anything about the exile of Rāma and when she knows, her grief and shame is unfathomable. Thus the nobility of the queen is kept up. In short, all the women of Ayodhyā are shown as good, simple, loving and noble.

Gangā and Yamunā are divinities and they are intro-

duced as accompanying their Lord, the Ocean, to pacify the angry Rāma.

Of the other women, Śurpanakhā occupies an important position. The poet takes the versions of both the poets, Vālmiki and Bhavabhūti and combines them. Bhāsa and Bhavabhūti did not show Śurpanakhā in the shameful position of an amorous woman trying to get Rāma for herself. Bhavabhūti points her out as quite an admirable character held in honour at Rāvaṇa's court. Murāri also accepts this picture of Śurpanakhā and leaves out her shameful and disgusting behaviour as depicted by Vālmiki and Śaktibhadra. But, Rājasekhara on the other hand, makes her the head of the spies at Lankā; at the same time makes her fall in love with Rāma and get punished for this by Lakṣmaṇa. The story of the Rāmāyaṇa is followed up and then the role given to her by Bhavabhūti is also accepted in the play. So, Śurpanakhā is presented as a resourceful and devoted servant of the King of Lankā. But as a woman, she has her own weakness and she is not very scrupulous about following her own desires, and seems to have very loose morals. Of course she dares not tell her brother the true reason why she was disfigured by the Princes; but makes up the story that her ears and nose were cut because she tried to take Sītā away from Rāma to be brought to Rāvaṇa.¹

And thus she completes the revenge that she planned on Rāma.

Other female characters are only instruments to complete the trend of the narration and through their conversa-

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1. शूर्पणखा—(आत्मगतम्) रघुकुलराजधानीपरिस्थितौ रामलक्ष्मणावधिसरन्ती ह्यनिच्छद्भ्यां ताभ्यां बलात्कारक्रमेणोदशावस्थां कृतेति कथं ज्येष्ठभ्रातुः कथयिष्यामि । तदेवं तावद् (प्रकाशम्) देव ! अयोध्यानगर्ग्यां राम इति क्षत्रियकुमारोऽस्ति । तस्य भार्या भुवनैकसुन्दरी सीता नाम । लङ्केश्वरस्य समुचितेति अपहरन्ती ताभ्यां कापालिकव्रतयोग्या कृतास्मि । Bā. R. V. p. 294

tions, the reader is informed how Hanumān came and found Sītā, how the battle was won by Rāma and how Rāvaṇa was killed.

The fire-ordeal of Sītā is described in detail by Alakā to Lankā. But here again, though faithfully imitating Vālmīki in the general details, Rājasekhara does not cause Sītā to be humiliated by Rāma, as Vālmīki and Śaktibhadra have done. Murāri, Rājasekhara and later on Jayadeva, make the fire-ordeal really a supernatural and marvellous incident which raises Sītā's status.

There are three more plays come down to posterity through the pen of the same author. Draupadī, the heroine of the other famous epic, has been chosen as the heroine of the play, Bāla-Bhāratam, by him. Nobody can say what exactly the finished picture would have been, because only the first two acts of the play are available to us. Draupadī is the main female character here, and she appears on the stage in both the acts. In the first act she is the maiden to be won by fulfilling the condition of "Lakṣyavedha" and in the second she is in the disgraced condition of a slave to Duryodhana. Here also we find Rājasekhara following faithfully the story of the Mahābhārata. In both places, she is depicted as a beautiful, sensible, courageous and noble-hearted woman. This play seems to be rather more successful in action and suitable to be staged. Its literary merits are commendable and it also has more possibilities for acting on the stage. The first act tells us how Draupadī was won by Arjuna who was present in the *Swayamvara* in the guise of

Brāhmaṇa along with his four brothers. Draupadī is present with her friend and her brother Dhṛṣṭadyumna. The friend, the Bard and Dhṛṣṭadyumna describe the various kings present, one by one, when each of them comes forward and tries to shoot at the mark to be hit, and fails. The words of Draupadī in those occasions show her knowledge, wisdom, sense of humour and also self-sufficiency. She seems to

possess the special Kṣatriya characteristics and commands our admiration.

In the next act, she is brought to the full court of Duryodhana, in a very pitiable and disgraceful condition, by Duśśāsana. Yudhiṣṭhira has staked her down to his enemy and she along with her five husbands, had become slave to the Kaurava king. We are not told as to how she had become the wife of all the five brothers. But Duśśāsana abuses her and questions her chastity, pointing out, that she is not ashamed of being the wife of five men. He even goes to the extent of suggesting to her to become the wife of Duryodhana also¹. Even in that helpless position Draupadī seems to be a personification of noble and courageous womanhood. Her words do not cross the limit of modesty. She pleads with the villainous Duśśāsana to spare her from the disgrace of appearing before the elders and other kings with only one cloth on. Her famous question to the elders, whether she was pawned off first by Yudhiṣṭhira or he himself, the answer given by Vikarna fully explaining the significance of the same, commands our respect for her even in her humiliated position. The Draupadī depicted here, is quite a contrast to the one portrayed in the Veṇīsamhāra as we have already seen. Here, she takes the vow not to tie up the hair loosened by Duśśāsana till Bhīmasena ties it up for her with his fingers dipped in the blood of the sinner himself.²

In the Veṇīsamhāra, we have seen her with the hair

1. हे द्रौपदी त्वमसि कात्र पतिव्रतानाम्, किं दृष्ट पञ्चपुरुषा वनिता कलत्रं ।
दुर्योधनस्य तदिदं भज वाममूर्धं आस्फालितं मुकुलिताङ्गुलिना करेण ॥

Ba. bh. II. 41

2. द्रौपदी—एष मे कचकर्षणपरिभवः आमुक्तबन्धक्रमस्तत्सत्यमेव चञ्चरी-
करमणीयाकेशपाशच्छटा ।

नश्वाग्राङ्कुशकोटिपाटितमहादुःशासनोरःस्थलीरक्तोल्लेखिकरेण
निश्चितमिदं भीमेन या बध्यते ॥

Ba. bh. IV. 50

let loose in the same condition, thirteen years after the incidents described above. But, the difference between the two pictures is very remarkable. While Draupadī in this play arouses only our admiration, pity and respect at the same time, the same queen as depicted in the earlier play does not create any special feeling for her except, a fear that she was going to work as "ghṛta" in the fire of Bhīma's already kindled rage.

Sunandā and Surekhā are the two maids-in-attendance on Yudhiṣṭhira and Duryodhana respectively, and their words and actions are suitable to the masters they serve. While Sunandā is understanding, sensible and respectful, Surekhā is arrogant, talkative and shallow-minded. But, here again, we find that the women depicted have a high standard and respectability, whatever status they belong to.

The Karpūramanjarī and Viddhaśālabhanjikā are two other plays written by the same author. They have four acts each, with a theme almost the same in the outlines, with different characters. The speciality of the Karpūramanjarī is that it is written in prākṛt. Both these plays have the conventional story of the hero falling in love with a maiden, who is a princess in disguise and then final union, with the consent of the chief queen after many obstacles. These plays belong to the type called Nāṭikā and so have naturally many women depicted in them. The Karpūramanjarī is named after the heroine who is a cousin of the chief queen of King Candapāla, the hero of the play. This reminds us of the Mālavikāgnimitra of Kālidāsa and the Nāṭikās of Śrī Harṣa. This has greater resemblance to Ratnāvalī with the difference that instead of the minister Yaugandharāyaṇa, it is the queen's spiritual guide Bhairavānanda that caused the girl to enter the harem of Candapāla by his own yogic powers.

Vibhramalekhā, the queen, Vicakṣaṇā, her friend and maid-in-waiting, Karpūramanjarī, and Sārangikā are the women characters presented in this play. The story and

the action are equally fictitious and amorous. The erotic sentiment is predominant and physical beauty and the mutual attraction of the hero and heroine are the only things described. Woman seems to have come to that stage, where her physical attraction alone counted and her value was only as an object of pleasure to man. All the characters are stereotyped and there is no dramatic art worth mentioning existing in this play. Of course, Vicakṣaṇā, her sister Sulakṣaṇā and Karpūramanjari seem to be experts in composing verses characterised by erotic sentiment. All of them seem to be vying with one another in the description of the condition of Karpūramanjari due to her unfulfilled love for the king. The one indication may be that girls of the royal families were educated enough to be able to compose good verses. We have other proofs that corroborate this conclusion. In all similar plays from the earliest days, the girls of royal families were well-versed in all fine arts and literature.

The other play of Rājasekhara is the Viddhaśālabhanjikā. It is also the story of the king's love for another girl inspite of the presence of his duly wedded wife. But this is more refreshing to read, because of the novelty of the intrigues. The rival of the queen finally turns out to be her cousin and gets married to the king as desired by him. But, the comedy is complete when the Queen who wished to deceive and embarrass the king, is deceived and embarrassed herself in turn, and the king gets two wives, instead of the one, the queen pretended to give him. In this work, a better device is adopted to put the heroine within the reach of the king, because the father himself sends the daughter in the guise of a boy changing the name Mṛgānkavali to Mṛgānkavarman as a hostage to the court of King Vidyādharamalla, the hero. The statue device which gives the name to the play is also a change for the better from the other similar plays existant. The trick played by Vidyūṣaka on the queen's foster sister Nikhalā, and the queen's design to

avenge her are quite amusing and show the light-hearted or frivolous nature of the court-life. That even the queen could condescend to play a trick on her own husband, the ruling king, is an evidence to the falling morals and lowering dignity of royalty. When love of pleasure dominates the ruler, it is only natural that the surrounding people take the cue and behave accordingly. Under those circumstances if women become just a means of enjoyment for men, it is only the natural consequence.

The literary merits, poetic excellence and inventiveness of Rājasekhara have to be acknowledged but the imitative nature of all his works is too clear to be missed.

The Viddhaśālabhanjikā has a good number of female characters. Apart from the chief queen Madanavatī, the wife of Vidyādharamalla, there is the daughter of Candrarman, named Mṛgānkāvalī, and also Kuvalyamālā, the daughter of King Candamahāsena of Vatsa, Pingalikā, Mekhalā, Vicakṣaṇā, Sulakṣaṇā, Tarangikā, Kuraṅgikā, Hārayaṣṭi, Kaīakāntā, Vasantalatā, Māṅgalikā, Kalākeli, Mṛgānkalekhā, Bokulāvatī, Parabhr̥tikā, Kalpalatā and others are ladies-in-waiting of different grades on queen Madanavatī.

Taking into consideration the women characters in these four plays we find that while those in the first two belong to one type, those of the last two belong to quite a different category altogether. Sītā and Draupadī, the heroines of the oldest epics, show a dignity, strength of character and nobility which is altogether absent in the women of the royal courts of the later kings who had already begun to think of them in terms of their enjoyment of worldly pleasures. Though all the four plays were written by the same poet, the difference of the pictures of the women in those plays sets one thinking. The ancient Indian tradition had lent a galaxy of light around those heroines, that it is next to impossible, to bring them down to the low status of the women, queens and princesses though they may be in the

courts of the luxury-loving kings of the later centuries. Hence there is a vast gap between the standards of Sītā and Draupadī on the one hand and of Madanavatī and Viśrāmalekhā on the other. The former two still continue to be really the better-halves of their respective husbands, inspite of all they had to suffer. But the queens Madanamālā and Viśrāmalekhā are mere companions of their husbands in pleasure. Their interests centre round amorous sports and jealous intrigues to put down any possible new rivals. Naturally, silly pranks and petty quarrels can be the only results. The kings represented in both these dramas are even worse than the heroes of the Rātnāvalī and the Priyadarśikā.

There is one indication in the Viddhasālābhanjikā that maidens and married women could be distinguished by their dresses. The Vidūṣaka, seeing the picture of Mṛgānkāvalī on the wall decides that she is a maiden as is obvious from her dress¹.

There are a few suggestions scattered here and there in these works which show the unfavourable attitude towards women among the general public. For example, in the Bālarāmāyaṇa, Rāvaṇa says that the love of women changes according to the higher and higher qualities existent in different men². That is to say, women are fickle and they change their love from one man to another, when they see better and better men. A sentence with the same idea is put into Sītā's mouth also in another place.

Women were considered to be weak and hence deserved to be protected. Killing women was considered a sin from

1. विदूषकः—कन्येति सूचयति वेषविशेष एव

यस्त्रीलचोलकवती लिखितात्र चित्रे ।

पाणिग्रहात् प्रभृति तु प्रमदाजनस्य

नीवी निवेशसुभगः परिधानमार्गः ॥

Vi. Śā. Bh. I. 34

2. रावणः—स्त्रीणां प्रेम यदुत्तरोत्तरगुणश्रामस्पृहाचञ्चलम् ॥ Bā. R. V. 2

the earliest times, whatever their fault may be. That idea has become more and more strong and has reached a point, when it became a shameful act. Rāvaṇa says to Paraśurāma, "Whatever that be, Rāvaṇa is not Bhārgava, who is unmanly towards women, who are to be pitied and protected¹." In short, the condition of women as seen in those plays is neither praiseworthy nor elevating. They had come to be considered as weak and pitiable.

Their beauty and attractiveness saved their position within the four walls of the house. Men could not resist the temptation of sexual pleasures and hence women, though not honoured, were still tolerated and preserved as necessary evils. As men in general could not do without women, they were superficially respected and adored for their physical beauty.

Quite a number of plays must have been written, during these centuries but no drama of real quality is available to posterity. Those available are inferior and imitative productions cast in loose dramatic form with innumerable lyrical and descriptive verses in between. The main desire of the poets seems to be to please the audience of the royal Courts and they became more of a light strain, full of fun and frolic and the ideal of the dramatic art seems to have been forgotten.

The luxury-loving audience were to be pleased and so court intrigues and amorous life of kings and nobles became the favoured themes. This naturally gave scope only for characters of flippant and light-hearted nature. So, it is not strange that we do not get the real pictures of any characters, specially of women. Still, dramas continued to be written. Most of them centre round the marriage of one princess or another of the ancient lore, such as Rukmiṇī,

1. रावणः—सर्वमस्ति यतो न भार्गव इव रावणः करुणात्मनि (च) परित्रा-
तव्ये स्त्रीजनेऽपुरुषः ।

Draupadī, Sītā, Damayantī or some fictitious princess. Hence there is not much scope for a detailed study of these characters which are almost stereotyped.

There is one Rāma drama, the Prasanna-Rāghava of Jayadeva which also treats the story of Rāma from the marriage of Sītā to the coronation of Rāma at Ayodhyā after the killing of Rāvaṇa. The approximate date of this author may be taken to be the fourteenth century. The outline of the story is the same as in the Rāmāyaṇa, while there are more ideas and incidents newly introduced. For example, Bāṇa is unnecessarily introduced as a suitor for Sītā's hand. Sītā, her friends, the River deities Gangā, Yamunā, Sarayū, Tungabhadra and Godāvarī, and the Rākṣasī Trijaṭā are the female characters in this play. All of them show more or less the same traditional traits and do not seem to have much to do with real life. As the many other plays written after Bhavabhūti, there is no real drama in this work also. We seem to be reading a leaf from some old folklore full of many supernatural interventions.

Sītā, appears on the scene in the second act, and is shown as falling in love with Rāma, before the Bow of Śiva was even lifted. A shadow of the "Yajñaphala" is reflected here also. The meeting of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with Sītā and her friends in the garden is very interesting. Sītā's feeling towards Lakṣmaṇa at first sight is that of a mother to her son, even though she does not know who he was.¹

Sītā is a beautiful and soft-hearted girl—loving, obedient and broad-minded. She has all the good qualities, a girl belonging to a noble family should possess. The characterisation of Sītā and Trijaṭā is more or less on the same lines as by Murāri and Rājaśekhara. Most of the incidents from

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1. सीता—हला, कोयं कनकवर्णः शिखण्डिपिच्छमण्डितकर्णपूरो मुग्धत्व-
विमुक्तलोचनविकारः कुमारो दृश्यते । इमं पश्यन्त्या मम निजवत्स
इव वात्सल्यप्रक्षालितं हृदयं वर्तते । Pr. R. II. p. 71

the marriage of Sītā upto her abduction are narrated in a conversation among the River Goddesses Gangā, Yamunā, Sarayū and others. The main characteristic of the drama, namely action on the stage, is lacking in this play also. Hence the characters do not have any individuality to attract our attention. The same is true about the female characters also, because they are more or less like puppets moved by a string. After Śaktibhadra, all the plays written centering round the story of Sītā show almost the same characters and characteristics.

The attempt to deify Rāma is seen in all these later Rāma dramas.

A deviation comes in the Kundamālā of Dingnāga, which once again takes up the story of the banishment of Sītā by Rāma. The general outline is the same as that of the Uttararāmacarita of Bhavabhūti. Still there are differences to be noted, which warrant a closer study. Though the story of Rāma upto the end of the Yuddhakāṇḍa has formed the basis of innumerable Sanskrit plays, two plays are available in which the main incidents of the Uttararāmacarita, namely, the banishment of Sītā, is dealt with: one by Bhavabhūti and the other by Dingnāga or Viranāga, who is placed somewhere in the later eleventh century by learned scholars¹.

Though the story in the Kundamālā resembles that of Bhavabhūti's Uttararāmacarita, many incidents which helped the rational denouement are either changed or left out in the former. The Sambūka episode and the consequent meeting of Vāsantī and Rāma are replaced by the arrival of the whole court of Rāma at the Naimiśāranya for the Aśvamedha and by inviting Vālmīki with all the inmates of his hermitage. The meeting of Rāma with Lava and Kuśa is described here also. But the circumstances are quite different.

1. History of Sanskrit Literature by De. and Das Gupta.

These changes have affected the development of the theme quite adversely. The play begins with the exile of Sītā and ends in the re-union of Rāma and Sītā. The order of banishment is disclosed to Sītā by Lakṣmaṇa¹, which leaves her completely helpless and weak. She wails: "Oh! my detention at the place of Rāvaṇa is coming up again: Even I, Sītā, am suspected thus! Indeed, being a woman should cease! Fie with this womanhood²!"

This reminds us of the reply Sītā gives to the harsh words of Rāma at Lankā, "You have remembered only this that I am a woman."³ But there she says this with self-confidence and with the courage of her own righteousness and purity. While Rāma seems to have lost his balance of mind, Sītā tries to calm him telling him that the attitude he has taken is wrong and unsuitable to him.

But, here, the words *Sarvathalam Mahilatvena* are indicative only of a wailing in the wilderness, the wailing of an ill-treated, helpless woman.

The mode of exile, as described in *Kundamālā* is also quite different from the earlier works. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma's specific orders were that she should be left on the other bank of the Ganges in the forest near Vālmiki's hermi-

1. अ. लक्ष्मणः—त्यक्ता किल त्वमार्येण चारित्रगुणशालिना ।
मयापि किल गन्तव्यं त्वक्त्वा त्वामिह कानने ॥

K. M. I. 10

आ. लक्ष्मणः—तुल्यान्वयेत्यनुगुणोति गुणोन्नतेति,
दुःखे सुखे च सततं सहचारिणीति ।

जानामि केवलमहं जनवादभीत्या

सीते ! त्यजामि भवतीं न तु भावदोषात् ॥ K. M. I. 12

2. सीता—रावणभवनोदन्तः पुनरप्युद्वाधयति । सीताया अपि नाम एवं
संभाव्यत इति सर्वथाज्ञं महिलात्वेन । K. M. I. p. 21

3. त्वया तु नरशार्दूल क्रोधमेवानुवर्तता ।

लघुनैव मनुष्येण स्त्रीत्वमेव पुरस्कृतम् ॥

V. R. VI. 119.14

tage¹, Kālidāsa's Rāma also asks Lakṣmaṇa to take her to Vālmīki's dwelling and leave her there.²

Bhavabhūti does not make clear what the orders of Rāma were. But, what we can imagine from the later incidents, as described in the *Garbhāṅka* agrees with the facts as shown in the *Kundamālā*, where Rāma specifically asks Lakṣmaṇa to leave her somewhere in the forests near the Gangā. This does not at all indicate any soft feelings for Sītā in the heart of Rāma. And this conjecture is supported by the actions of Rāma in the very end of the play.

Sītā, of course, is the heroine, and other female characters presented are the girls of Vālmīki's hermitage, while the three queens—Kauśalyā, Kaikeyī and Sumitrā—their three daughters-in-law and Tilottamā, the heavenly nymph, are referred to. Sītā appears before us descending the banks of the Ganges, where she was to be abandoned by Lakṣmaṇa.

The order of Rāma to Lakṣmaṇa was to take her in the chariot driven by Sumantra and leave her in some wilderness. This was to be done in the guise of fulfilling her desire to see the river Ganges. Her banishment is necessary because Rāma is not prepared to allow any blemish to come on the spotlessly clean fame of this noble family, just for the sake of Sītā³.

1. गङ्गायास्तु परे पारे वाल्मीकेस्तु महात्मनः ।

आश्रमो दिव्यसङ्काशस्तमसातीरमाश्रितः ।

तत्रैनां विजने देशे विसृज्य रघुनन्दन ॥

शीघ्रमागच्छ सौमित्रे कुरुष्व वचनं मम । V. R. VII. 45. 17-19

2. स त्वं रथी तद्व्यपदेशनेयां प्रापय्य वाल्मीकिपदं त्यजेताम् । R.V. XIV. 45

3. लक्ष्मणः—(आत्मगतम्) तन्न शक्नोमि सीतामात्रस्य कृते शरच्चन्द्रनिर्मल-
स्येक्ष्वाकुकुलस्य कलङ्कमुत्पादयितुम् । सीतया चाहं गर्भिणीभाव-
सुलभेन दोहदेन भागीरथीदर्शनं प्रार्थितः । तस्मात् त्वमनेन
गङ्गागमनव्याजेन सुमन्त्राधिष्ठितं रथमारोप्य कस्मिंश्चिद् वनोद्देशे
परित्यज्य निवर्तस्व—इति ।

K. M. I. p. 10

Dingnāga has tried to follow Vālmiki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti, in the treatment of this theme which is peculiarly different from all the existing dramas. Bhavabhūti was the only one who took up this episode of the Rāmāyaṇa, which is really the most significant and valuable one for all times. We have already seen how Bhavabhūti succeeded in holding up the ideal love of Rāma and Sītā and its fulfilment in his Uttara-Rāmacarita. Dingnāga, who came centuries after Bhavabhūti tried his hand on this theme once more. Though the theme is the same, there are many subtle differences noticeable in this later play. The Kundamālā (flower-garland) itself, from which the play has derived its name, is an invention of Dingnāga. Instead of Vāsantī of the Uttara-Rāmacarita, we have got Vedavatī in this play. Many incidents of the earlier play have been left out and many substitutes added, but these changes have not in any way embellished the play or improved the characters. And the conditions that we can see by reading between the lines are not in any way suggestive of a happy life, as far as the women are concerned.

The poet does not leave a single opportunity of avowing the deep love of Rāma for Sītā. From the time of Vālmiki, Rāma and Sītā was the last word on conjugal love and fidelity. It is claimed to be so in the Kundamālā also. But, actions do not prove the words. The words of Rāma are more of a master than a loving husband. Sītā, the ever-adored ideal of Indian womanhood, remains so in this play also. But the ideal seems to have been remodelled to suit the taste of the audience. This Sītā is weak and timid unlike the Sītā in the Rāmāyaṇa and in the Raghuvamśa. Here, she seems to be as frail and weak as a creeper. The message that Sītā gives to Lakṣmaṇa at the time of his departure is the same as found in the Rāmāyaṇa and Raghuvamśa but there is a great difference in the expression. In the earlier works, we

find Sita dignified, self-confident and confident of Rāma's love for her. In the Rāmāyaṇa, she takes the banishment upon her as a duty, because she is the *Sahadharmacārini* of Rāma and she is equally responsible for removing the scandal that has come over the noble race of the Raghus. In the Raghuvamśa, she resents the treatment meted out to her but still realises the helplessness of Rāma in the matter and hence, after the first wave of resentment and anger passed, she sends the dignified and meaningful message, which we have already discussed in a previous chapter. But here in the Kundamālā, the order of banishment repeated to her by Lakṣmaṇa comes to her as a stunning blow—a veritable bolt from the blue. She is not able to think or to say anything; she only broods over her own fate. When reminded by Lakṣmaṇa, she gives messages to her mothers-in-law, but none to Rāma. When asked by Lakṣmaṇa, again and again she tries to say something, not because she is courageous or broad-minded enough to do so, but because it was not possible to reject Lakṣmaṇa's solicitations. And finally, she gives a formal message that he should not worry about her, but look after himself and be alertly performing his normal duties.¹ And there she adds, when she is once again asked by Lakṣmaṇa whether she had nothing more to say "Tell him 'it is not proper for you to banish me, who is in no way guilty, from your heart, much less so from your house, and even from your kingdom.' " Lakṣmaṇa

१. सीता—तथा निष्ठुरो नाम सन्दिश्यत इत्यप्रतिहतवचनतैषा लक्ष्मणस्य, न सीताया घन्यत्वम् । तथा मम वचनात्तं जनं विज्ञापय—मन्दभागिनी-मनुशोचन् वर्याश्रमपरिपालनमभिघ्नन्नात्मानं न विधेय, सद्धर्मं स्वशरीरे सावधानो भवेति ।

K. M. I. 24

2. सीता—एवमपि तं जनं विज्ञापय—न युक्तं तव निरपराधमिमं जनं सपदि हृदयतो निर्वासयितुं किं पुनर्विषयत इति ।

K. M. I. 125

agrees with her.¹ What a contrast to the spirited words of Sitā portrayed by Kālidāsa ?

She also says: "Please submit to him also thus from me," 'that woman, living in the hermitage, requests you with hands folded on the head to be kind enough to remember her, either as a woman without any good qualities but known to you for long, as a destitute, or as Sitā, whichever way you prefer.'"²

In contrast to this we are forcibly reminded of the last words of the message of Sitā to Rāma in the Raghuvamśa—"It is the duty of the King, as ordained by Manu, to look after all people belonging to all the Varnas and Āśramas. So, though you have banished me from your city, you will have to protect me even as the many other hermit women living in the forest."³

Throughout the play, wherever Sitā is presented, the same weakness and helplessness are clearly seen. The worst of the whole episode is seen in the last act, where Sitā enters the presence of Rāma to take the vow. There is a vast difference between the entrance of Sitā here and in the Uttara-Rāmacarita. There, Sitā's purity and chastity were vouched by persons no less than Arundhati, Bhūmī and Gangā. And naturally enough she is accepted without a word of opposition by Rāma. But in the Kundamālā, Sitā herself is made to enter as a supplicant

1. लक्ष्मणः — सन्देष्टव्यमार्यया सन्दिष्टम् ।

आर्या निर्वासिता नाम हृदयात् प्रभविष्णुना ।
कथं गृहाद् गृहं नाम कथं जनपदादपि ॥

K. M. I. 15

2. सीता—सा तपोवनवासिनी सर्वथा सीमन्तनिहितेनाञ्जलिना विज्ञापयति,
यद्यहं निर्गुणा चिरपरिचितेति वा, अनायेति वा, सीतेति वा
स्मरण—मात्रकेनानुगृहीतव्येति ।

K. M. I. p. 25

3. नृपस्य वर्णाश्रमपालनं यस्स एव धर्मो मनुना प्रणीतः ।

निर्वासिताप्येवमतस्त्वयाहं तपस्विसामान्यमवेक्षणीया ॥ R. V. XIV. 67

and take the vow once again before the people. Rāma does not accept even Vālmiki's avowal of Sītā's purity, and willingly allows him to go away in anger.¹ The counter-question of Sītā—"How am I to make them believe?"² in answer to Vālmiki's words of anger and sorrow, at the insulting behaviour of the two brothers,³ is agonising for any one with a heart. And finally Sītā has to stand before the public and repeat her vow. Both Vālmiki and Kālidāsa have described this scene, but the dignity of womanhood was never at stake. Sītā has been shown by both poets as taking the vow, but that vow stands as an eternal lesson to all who doubt the innocent and dishonour the pure women. She gave the proof of her *Satītvā*, but did not accept the worldly happiness as a reward! On the other hand, in Kundamālā, the Goddess Pṛthvī had to come up and certify to the character of Sītā. The long process of Pṛthvī's avowal and the people's acceptance seem to be a continuous period of insult to Sītā. At the end of everything, Rāma shows his acceptance only by telling Lakṣmaṇa to bow down at her feet⁴. Still she is quite happy, and feels as though she is blessed. When Rāma, obeying the insistent words of Vālmiki takes her by the hand, her happiness knows no bounds. She clearly says, "As you say now, my soul is breathing again—I have once more come back to life."⁵

1. वाल्मीकिः—किमनेन कण्ठयनेन । गृहाण कुशलवो । गच्छामः स्वमाश्रमपदम् ।

रामलक्ष्मणी—प्रसीदतु, गच्छतु भगवान् । K. M. VI. p. 180

2. सीता—अहं किं परिबोधयामि । K. M. VI. p. 180

3. वाल्मीकिः—वैदेही ! तपोवन-गतानामपि दण्डं समाज्ञापयति । तत्परिशोध्यतामात्मा । K. M. VI. p. 180

4. रामः—यदाज्ञापयति गुरवः । वत्स लक्ष्मण ! क्रियतां पादप्रणामः ।

K. M. VI. p. 194

5. सीता—यदायं पुत्र आज्ञापयति । उच्छ्वसितो मे आत्मा । प्रत्यागता मे प्राणाः । K. M. VI. p. 196

This is so unlike the *Sītā*, who though one with *Rāma*, still has a sense of self-respect as portrayed by the earlier writers. *Sītā* is the same, but the picture seems to have lost its glory and splendour.

There are two hermit women, *Vedavatī* and *Yajñavatī* presented in the *Kundamālā* as friends of *Sītā*. *Vedavatī* in this play seems to substitute *Vāsantī* in the *Uttara-Rāma-carita*. But, the contrast between the two is too obvious. Of course, the whole situation is different. While *Vāsantī* was the dearest friend of both *Rāma* and *Sītā*, *Vedavatī* knows only *Sītā*. So, an amount of partiality towards *Sītā* on her part is understandable. But, the way in which she persistently tries to convince *Sītā* that *Rāma* does not love her, is more suitable to a woman of the ordinary world than a girl of the hermitage. She plainly asks, "Why are you thus destroying yourself for the sake of that cruel and callous man?"

Sītā with her unshakable confidence in *Rāma*'s love goes on avowing the same against every attack made by *Vedavatī*. But *Vedavatī* is not convinced; neither, would she leave it at that. Where *Sītā* quotes the wondrous feats of *Rāma*, such as *Setubandhan* and *Rāvaṇavadha* to rescue her, *Vedavatī* promptly answers, "Oh! self-praising one! the anger against *Rāvaṇa* is quite natural for the *Kṣatriya*, but not the love for *Sītā*."² This reminds us of the words of *Rāma* in *Raghuvamśa*, "Does the serpent bite him, who touched it by the feet, due to thirst for blood?"³ When

1. वेदवती—अयि अपण्डिते ! तथा निरपेक्षस्य निरनुक्रोशस्य कृते कीदृक् त्वम-
सितपक्षचन्द्रलेखेव दिने दिने परिहीयसे । K. M. II. p. 52

2. वेदवती—आत्मश्लाघिनी ! क्षत्रियाणां समुचित एव रावणस्य उपरि रोषो,
न सीतायाः उपर्यनुरागः । K. M. II. p. 53

3. रक्षोवधान्तो न च मे प्रयासो व्यर्थः स वैरप्रतिमोचनाय ।

अमर्षणः शोणितकाङ्क्षया किं पदा स्पृशन्तं दशति द्विजिह्वः ॥

R. V. XIV. 41

Sītā quotes the fact that Rāma still remains single, the answer is: "Don't be too proud! The time is quite near for Rāma's Yajñadikṣā¹", meaning thereby that he would not remain single much longer. All this from a friend who knows Sītā's heart only too well, is rather strange, unless it is to show that the ordinary trend of feminine nature is to seek out the wrong side of things everywhere!

Yajñavatī is an ordinary simple girl, who does her daily duties, obeys the orders of her elders, and loves and adores her friend Sītā. These are the only active women characters in this play, while the three queens of Daśaratha and the wives of Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna are mentioned by names. The general idea that one gets after reading the *Kundamālā* is that women in general are of a low calibre and they deserved to be looked down upon by the high and mighty man. And the nature and conduct of women also seem to have undergone an adverse change.

The seclusion of women seems to have become an established fact by this time. After Lakṣmaṇa's departure, Sītā is very much agitated at the approach of Vālmiki who, she thought, was a stranger. "Oh God! here is some stranger. How am I to avoid this danger! Well, I shall do thus (loudly). I am a woman here, and all alone²." This clearly shows that a woman's seeing a man other than her own near and dear relations, has come to be considered as objectionable. The name "Antarvāsini", one who stays within, is used in this play as a synonym for women³. There is another ins-

1. वेदवती—सखि मा उत्ताम्य, समासन्नो रामस्य यज्ञ-दीक्षा-समयः ।

K. M. II. p. 54

2. सीता—अत्याहितम् ! अन्य एष को वा परपुरुषः । कथं इदानीं वारयिष्यामि महाहितम् ? (विचिन्त्य) एवम् । स्त्री ग्रहमेकाकिनी च ।

K. M. I. p. 37

3. वेदवती—सम्भृत एव यज्ञसम्भारो महाराजस्य, निमन्त्रितः सान्तर्वासिनीक-स्तपोधनानां सम्पातः ।

K. M. II. p. 47

tance in the fourth act, where it is said that Vālmiki, by his power of penance, has made the women invisible to any man in that lake because the women of the hermitage complained to him that they were unable to use the lake in the hermitage for bathing and plucking flowers due to the constant presence of the royal retinue¹.

While Kuśa and Lava are about to sing the Rāmāyaṇa in the presence of Rāma and other people assembled in the Naimiśāranya for the horse sacrifice, a place is kept apart hidden by a curtain. Rāma is informed by the Kancuki that there are seated the three Queens of the late King and the wives of Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna.² This is another proof in support of the conclusion that women did not appear before strangers and the *Purdāh* system was well in vogue when this play was written. This is a clear contrast to the repeated statements found in the Rāmāyaṇa that there is no harm in women being seen in public places, in sacrifices and other celebrations etc.³

1. वेदवती—अद्य सप्तमे दिवसे सम्पातिताभिस्तपोवनवासिनीभिर्विज्ञापितो भगवान् वाल्मीकिः—एषा नूनमाश्रमदीधिका पद्मापचयादिषु आत्मन उपभोगेषु इदानीं महाराजस्य सन्निधानेन परपुरुष-नयन-परिक्षिप्ता न शक्या स्त्रीजनेनावगाहितुम् । इति । तदा भगवता वाल्मीकिना निध्यान-निश्चल-नयनेन मुहूर्तं निध्याय भणितम्—‘एतस्यां दीधिकायां वर्तमानः स्त्रीजनः पुरुष-नयनानामगोचरो भविष्यति’—इति । K. M. IV. p. 89

2. रामः—किमिदमपरमस्मदन्तिकाद् यवनिकया तिरोधीयते ।

कंचुकी—एतास्तिस्रो महादेव्यः कौसल्याद्याः महीपतेः ।

एतद्भरत-शत्रुघ्न-लक्ष्मणानां वधू-त्रयम् ॥

K. M. VI. p. 163

3. अ.—व्यसनेषु च कृच्छ्रेषु न युद्धेषु स्वयंवरे ।

न क्रतौ न विवाहे च दर्शनं दुष्यति स्त्रियाः ॥ V. R. VI. 196. 27

आ.—गायन्त्यो नृत्यमानाश्च वादयन्त्यश्च सर्वशः ।

आमोदं परमं जग्मुर्वराभरणभूषिताः ॥ V. R. I. 32. 13

The conversation between Rāma and Vidūṣaka in the Naimiśa forest, when Rāma was agitated after seeing the reflection of Sītā in the lake, is rather significant. There, when Rāma says, in answer to Kuśika's question, that he remembers Vaidehī neither by her merits nor demerits, the Brāhmin innocently says: "How is it possible to remember women except by either of these?" Rāma answers that it is so with other couples, but for Rāma and Sītā, their love for each other does not depend upon any cause.¹ The statement might have been taken as a casual one if the particular reference to women—the word *Simantinya* were not there. Usually, people are specially remembered if they are either very good or very bad. That may be true about women also. But this special reference once more points out to the mentality of men to take the first opportunity to denounce women. The general condition of women as could be seen throughout this play is much worse than what has been observed hitherto.

The Nalavilāsa by Ramacandrasūri is a drama written with the story of Damayantī and Nala as the theme. The story has been changed from the original in many places, perhaps to suit dramatic purposes. It has been brought to the human level, leaving out the desire of Indra and others for Damayantī and also other supernatural elements. Kali and Kārkoṭaka are completely eliminated. The king of Kalacuri is shown as the rival suitor to the hand of Damayantī, and the Kāpālīka, Ghoraghoṇa and his retinue are his helpers. Damayantī, the heroine, Kapinjalā, Maka-

1. रामः — वयस्य, अस्त्येतत् । स्मराम्यहमविच्छेदेन वैदेहीम् ।

विदूषकः — किं दोषतः उत गुणतः ।

रामः — न दोषतो नापि गुणतः ।

विदूषकः — एतदुभयमुज्झित्वा कथं सीमन्तिन्यः स्मरन्ते ।

रामः — अन्यदस्पृतीविषय एव कारणानुरोधी प्रेमाऽऽवेष्टाः, सीतारामयोस्तु न तथा ।

rikā, and Lambastanī are the four female characters in this play. The outline of the story and the main incidents are more or less the same. Puṣkara in the original story is replaced by Kubera here. Kirāta episode has been done away with. And instead of Kārkoṭaka, it is Niṣadha, the father of Nala, who bites him in the guise of the serpent. A play within a play is introduced as a means to find out the refuge of Nala after he left Damayantī. Hearing the *Sūryapāka* in the court of Dadhiparṇa, Damayantī sends her friends Kalahaṁsa, Makarikā and Kapinjalā to stage the play describing the incidents after the abandonment of Damayantī by Nala in the forest. She also sends an invitation to Dadhiparṇa for the alleged second *Swayamvara* of Damayantī.

The denouement of the story is more interesting by the actions of Ghoraghoṇa, who was not yet pacified nor defeated. He sends the false news of Nala's demise which makes Damayantī prepare to ascend the funeral pyre. But the timely arrival of Nala, saves the situation and all ends well.

This play though romantic, differs from the many other stereotyped ones. Of course, the love of the hero and the heroine and their pangs of separation are described but that comes only in the second act. This has a refreshing atmosphere. The original character of Damayantī is retained in this drama also. She has an individuality of her own. She is not the ordinary princess who weeps, wails and pines off for her lover, or looks to others for help at every step. She has knowledge, wisdom and courage. The scene of the *Swayamvara*, where she passes on from one king to another with clever and apt remarks, gives us ample evidence of her ready wit and sense of humour. It is she who plans the staging of the play in the court of Dadhiparṇa, and also she takes the law into her own hands and announces her second *Swayamvara* to that king, in order to bring Nala to

Kuṇḍina. There is a dignity and a grace that surround her. She is quite a refreshing exception among the many female characters in the different dramas written during this period.

Makarikā, the attendant of Nala, and Kapinjalā, the friend of Damayantī are two other equally interesting female characters in this play. Both are devoted to their respective master and mistress and equally to both after they are united in marriage. Their loyalty and devotion are equalled only by their untiring activities to help the king and queen in their adversity. Both of them prove themselves to be worthy of the confidence placed in them. These two with Kalahāṃsa, the friend of King Nala were the real helpers in bringing back Nala to his lost kingdom and wife.

Lambastanī is a strange character on the Sanskrit stage. She is the wife of Ghoraghona, the Kāpālika. She is very fat, and her description¹ seems to present before us the personification of the *Bibhatsa* sentiment. And the achievements she claims to her credit are equally fierce and disgusting.² Whether she was able to do all that she boasted, is doubtful. But Kalahāṃsa thinks that of all the things perhaps she is able to manage miscarriage, but nothing else.³

1. कलहंसः —अपरं च

कार्कश्यभूः स्तनतटी न गिरां विलासः

केशाः परां कुटिलतां दधते न चेतः ।

तस्याः कुरङ्गकदृशो नृपचक्रशक्र !

जाड्यं गतौ न तु मतौ विधृतावकाशम् ॥ N. V. II. 6.

2. लम्बस्तनी—(सगर्वम्) भो महाराज !

अपुत्रेभ्यः पुत्रं ददामि । अनाचारसंजातान् गर्भान् पातयामि ।

दुर्लभमपि प्रियजनं सम्पादयामि । किं बहुना ? यत् त्रिभुवने

ज्येसाध्यं तत् साधयामि । N. V. II. p. 25

3. राजा—(अपवार्यं) अहो धृष्टता ! अहो निर्लज्जता ! विमृश संवदति

किमप्येतदुक्तम् ?

कलहंसः —न किमपि, गर्भपातं पुनर्जनाति ।

N. V. II. p. 25

A woman in name, and a demon in figure and actions, she is a peculiar character brought on the stage by Rāmacandra Suri's imagination.

The Candakauśika of Kṣemendra is another play based on an epic theme, the original being the famous story of king Hariścandra found in the Mahābhārata and other epics. The only important female character depicted is Śaibyā, the queen, who shares all the adversities that came upon her husband, through no fault of his except his being too good. First, she is presented in the palace, surrounded by luxuries, and next we see her following the king with their son, in utter poverty. The story as found in the epic is faithfully followed by the author in this drama. The nobility and goodness of Śaibyā is in no way less than that of her husband. The pathetic picture of the queen in the third and fifth acts is quite touching. And when everything ends well we heave a sigh of relief, specially for the sake of this noble and patient woman.

Cārumatī, the friend and maid-in-attendance of Śaibyā, is "the good servant of the very good queen". She shows evidence of good training and noble birth. She is quite devoted and loyal to her mistress.

There are a number of dramas, mentioned by the various writers on Alaukārā, which have themes based on the various episodes from Mahābhārata, Bhāgavata, Hari-vamśa and others. As we have already noticed, all these plays are more or less the reflections of the old epic stories developed by the fertile imaginations of the various writers, and hence they do not create an atmosphere of reality around them.

Apart from the many plays based on the epic stories, there are a number of semi-historical and romantic plays also. To take each of them for study is not necessary for our purpose due to the imitative nature of almost all such works. We have already studied in detail the Viddhasālabhanjikā of

Rājaśekhara. Most of the other plays of this type follow the same techniques, the difference being only in the names of the characters and the sequence of incidents.

The *Karṇasundarī* of Bilhaṇa is one such play which borrows the technique from Kālidāsa, Śrī Harṣa and Rājaśekhara. It is said by scholars that the story is actually based on the marriage of the Calukya King Karṇadeva, with a princess. Karṇasundarī, the heroine, Madanalekhā, the chief queen, and the usual maids-in-attendance are the female characters presented. Karṇasundarī, the heroine is seen in a dream by the king and then in a picture, painted on the wall of the pleasure-house in the royal garden. She is a Vidyādhara princess and is introduced into the palace by the clever minister of the king, who wanted his master to marry this girl, because it was said that her husband would become a great emperor. The usual jealousy of the queen, the imprisonment of the heroine, the disguise of the queen as Karṇasundarī, are more or less as found in the *Ratnāvalī* and the *Karpūramanjari*, the two earlier Nāṭikās which we have studied.

All the women characters show more or less the same traits, and each of them behaves according to pattern. We seem to be reading the same story over and over again, with changed names. The behaviour of the queen does not show any dignity of her position or broad-mindedness which one expects in a noble-born lady. The young girls also do not show any integrity or individuality or grace. After seeing the hero, the heroine is in the agonies of separation and finally the meeting with the hero cures her. All these are court comedies of the lighter type and seem to have come down to the level of a passing mode of enjoyment, even as the women depicted in them betray the status of instruments or objects of pleasure and enjoyment for man.

CHAPTER VI

WOMEN IN THE PLAYS AFTER THE 12TH CENTURY UPTO THE 19TH CENTURY

We have seen in the previous chapter how the literary field was becoming decadent and how very little scope there was to study individual characters. This condition was more true and was growing still worse as far as the female characters were concerned. Coming down to the later centuries, we are able to gather still less data, not because the number of plays written was less, but because originality, creative intellect and imagination were lacking in the works produced during this period.

The records of history tell us that the position of women in society was steadily deteriorating in all respects. The freedom they enjoyed during the earliest times had come to an end. As Dr. Altekar puts it, "Proprietary rights apart, in all other spheres, the position of women continued to deteriorate in this period... From the theological point of view the women came naturally to be regarded as of the same status as the Śūdra. This inflicted an incalculable harm on their general status and prestige."¹

The gradual increase in population, the oft-repeated foreign invasions and the consequent psychological changes that came over the society caused the rules, laid down by the law-givers concerning women, to be interpreted and implemented in the narrowest possible sense. The necessity

1. Dr. Altekar : Position of Women in Hindu Civilization.
p. 429.

of protecting women from the eyes of strangers perhaps reached such a stage that seclusion of women, became the law of the day. A close study of the dramatic literature available in this period goes a long way to support this conclusion.

Examining the dramas written during this period one feels that the creative genius had gone underground. These plays do not seem to fulfil the real aim of poetry, combining instruction with enjoyment. The poets, though wishing to give expression to their ideas, seem to hesitate in taking any bold step or treading on any new path for fear of shocking the patternized society in which they lived, and so, confined themselves to provide enjoyment to their audience. To be on the safest side, they chose their themes from the Epics and followed the rules laid down by the dramaturgists to the utmost. Love and marriage being the most attractive elements for the ordinary minds, they formed the themes for most of the plays. Naturally, the heroines depicted in these dramas belonged to royal families of the epic age, who could not have much in common with the age in which these plays were written.

The practice of women taking part in plays seems to have ceased by the time of Bhavabhūti, as we have already seen. The men acting the part of women must have also provided much difficulty in the successful staging of the plays. We have got more than one example within the various plays to show the practice of men disguising as women even within the body-plot of the play. A peculiarity that is found in these later days is that there are quite a number of plays which fall into the various categories of smaller types, called the *Uparūpaka*, such as *Prahasana*, *Bhāṣa*, *Vyāyoga*, *Śṛīgadita*, *Vithi* etc. There are a few which are indicated by the authors themselves as *Chhaya Nāṭaka*. There are others which depict abstract qualities personified, and are allegorical in nature. In spite of

the care taken by the poets to keep up the imaginary characteristics in their works, it is not impossible for a close observer to notice some points that would indicate the nature and position of women in these centuries.

The *Viṇāvāsavadatta* is an incomplete play that has been published recently. The story closely resembles the incidents described in the *Pratiññāyauḡandharāyaṇa* ascribed to Bhāsa. In the *Āścaryacūḍamaṇi* of Śaktibhadra, which we have examined in the previous chapter, a play named "Unmāḍavāsavadatta" is referred to. The editor of "*Viṇāvāsavadatta*" suggests that this may be the same as the play of Śaktibhadra. The story goes that the father of the princess Vāsavadattā worships Lord Śiva in order to get a suitable husband for his beloved daughter, and in his dream he is told by the Lord that he would soon obtain a good son-in-law. Though the girl was promised to the prince of Aśmaka, the king is not willing to give her in marriage to that prince, because the latter is a bad character and drunkard. Hence the ministers decide upon King Udayana as the suitable bridegroom, and they set up a conspiracy to capture the Vatsa King. The story goes upto the success of the plot by Bharatarohaka and Śālamkāyana, the ministers of Ujjayinī. The Vatsaraja's minister, Yauḡandharāyaṇa is getting ready to get his king released, when the play ends abruptly. The text does not present any female character so far. But it is possible to see from the anxiety of the king for his daughter Vāsavadattā, that the girls were as dear as sons to their fathers, if not more. It is also quite clear that marriage was considered a necessity for girls and the fathers were always anxious to get the best possible husbands for their daughters. The custom of giving riches to the bridegroom seems to be current from the statement of Bharatarohaka, who says that by giving Vāsavadattā in marriage to the Aśmaka prince, the treasury will be depleted, for he would have to give the Prince twice or thrice the amount of the

Śulka.¹ The attitude of the ministers that the girl may be carried away by Udayana and that would save their face with the Aśmaka prince, suggests the custom of the Kṣatriya marriages by Rākṣasa Vidhi, i. e., bridegroom carrying away the bride perforce. These are a few points that are clear from the incomplete play.

Another drama, published from Madraś, is the *Nalācaritra Nāṭakam*, written by Nilakaṇṭha Dikṣita. As suggested by the name itself, the play depicts the story of Nala. The date of this author is accepted as the 17th century by learned scholars. This play also is incomplete ending abruptly in the middle of the sixth act. The King of Niṣadha is described as love-sick due to his seeing Damayantī in a dream. Even this dream is caused by goddess Saraswatī, who works for the sake of Bhīma, the father of Damayantī, and a devotee of the goddess. Quite a number of changes are made in the body-plot of the play from the story as found in the Mahābhārata, and also the few other sources that we have got. This is the only place in which Nala is shown to have had a wife already, while he was attracted by the beauty of Damayantī.

Goddess Saraswatī, Damayantī, Sāvitrī, Anangalekhā and Sārangikā are the female characters represented in this play. Instead of the four Devas, here, only Indra is in love

१. अ. भरत—यथा प्रतिज्ञादाने त्रयो दोषाः ।

आ. राजा—के ते ?

इ. भरत—शम्भोरभिप्राय व्यतिकरः, कोषक्षयः,
राजपुत्र्याः दुःखभागिता च ।

ई. राजा—कथं कोषक्षयः ?

उ. भरत—शुल्काद् द्विगुणं त्रिगुणं वा ननु तस्मै देयम् ।

with Damayantī. The *Swayamvara* is stopped and by the interference of Saraswatī, matters are made easy for Damayantī and Nala. They are virtually married to each other by the Goddess, even before Indra gets a chance to request Nala to become his messenger. Nala is helped out of the difficult situation of taking the message of Indra to Damayantī by Sāvitrī, who persuades him to stay back by giving him the reply of Damayantī that she would rather die than marry any one else, but Nala. Indra is offended and goes away threatening Nala with dire consequences of disregarding the god of gods. Nala and Damayantī are happily married and they have two children, till which time the goddess Saraswatī stays with them in order to make Damayantī happy. All this is told to us in the beginning of the fifth act through the conversation of the hero and the heroine. It is also indicated that Indra is seeking friendship with Puṣkara to take revenge upon Nala. By a clever device, the future incidents of leaving the country, the children and also the separation of Nala are indicated through a bad dream of Damayantī in the fifth act itself. The play ends abruptly in the middle of the sixth act and so we are able to know nothing more.

Damayantī is depicted here more or less on the same lines as Mālatī in the *Prakarāṇa* of Bhavabhūti. There are quite a number of female characters, all of them, friends and helpers of Damayantī. The heroine is a love-sick, frail young girl who depends upon others to do everything for her. All the girls are the kinds of friends who help her in attaining her wishes and are the same stereotyped maids-in-attendance of the palaces whom we have already seen in the plays of Śrī Haṛṣa and also in other plays depicting similar themes. These characters do not in any way create in our minds the impression of reality. They pass before our eyes just as the characters in an imaginary situation giving some enjoyment for the moment, but they leave no lasting impres-

sion, nor create any emotion which could revolutionize the patternized life of the happy-go-lucky people.

Another play that attracts our attention is the *Ratneśvaraprasādanam* by Guru Rama Kavī. It seems that the 16th and the 17th centuries are marked with a revival of Sanskrit learning in South India. The Cera, Cola and Pāṇḍya kings were vying with each other not only for territorial supremacy, but also in encouraging the progress of culture by patronizing literature and fine arts. Scholars and poets were given very high positions in the South Indian courts, as could be gathered from historical records, inscriptions and other documents which are being brought to light continuously. The kings and chieftains not only supported bands of erudite scholars in their respective courts, but also received and honoured people of established reputation in the various fields of knowledge. Guru Rāma Kavī, the author of the play under review, belonged to the North Arcot district and was a younger contemporary of the famous South Indian poet and rhetorician, Appayya Dīkṣita. His works, as related in the introduction, are : Hariścandra-carita, Subhadrādhānanjaya, Madanagopālavilāsa, Vibhāgaratnamalika and Ratneśvaraprasādanam. As the very names suggest, the first three have their sources in the Mahābhārata and the Harivaṃśa. The last two are imaginary themes, while all, except the first play, deal with love and marriage of their respective heroes and heroines. Since all the women characters are more or less stereotyped, it is enough to take up one of the plays and see what the characters can tell us.

The *Ratneśvaraprasādanam* is easily seen as the best among the author's works from the point of view of literary merit, as stated by the editor of the work in his introduction. Ratnāvalī, the daughter of the Gandharva king, is the heroine and Candracūḍa's son, Ratnacūḍa is the hero. All the women characters are divine or semi-divine beings

and, naturally enough, Māyā, Indrajāla and superhuman powers are at work in the development of the plot. Ratnāvalī is the darling of goddess Saraswatī and by her blessings she is well-versed in fine arts, such as, music and painting. She is blessed by Lord Maheśvara to get Ratnacūda, the son of Candracūda, as her husband. Ratnāvalī sees him in her dream and he sees her in the temple of Ratneśvara. The course of love is obstructed by the interference of Subāhu, instigated by Nārada who wished to enjoy the fun of a fight. But finally the intruder is defeated by the hero and every thing ends well, the princess being given in marriage to Ratnacūda by her father, Vasubhūti.

The girls are beautiful and well-versed in fine arts, as all the heroines and their friends are expected to be. Ratnāvalī in a shy, modest and accomplished girl. Her friends are loving and ready to help her in all conditions. Every thing works on the expected pattern and so there is nothing more to be said about the character or characteristics of any of the dramatic personnel.

Balamārtanḍavijaya is another play written during this period. The poet is the famous Devarāja Kavi, who lived at the time of the heroic king, Mārtanḍavarmā of Travancore. The king himself is credited with the conquest of the various small states of the vicinity, their consolidation into one country, which was later dedicated to Lord Padmanābha and ruled by the king as His representative. Ever since then, the Kings of Travancore had the title of 'Śrī Padmanābha-dāsa' added to their names, the end of this custom coming only with the abolition of monarchy and the merger of the state into the Republic of India.

The drama is based on authentic history and almost all the incidents described are, by and large, historical. No female characters are depicted except two maids-in-attendance—Śarikā and Marālika—introduced perhaps for a change. They hardly serve any purpose, except to relate

some incidents in the play to the audience, for they appear in the interlude before the fourth act. We have references to the queen mother and also the princesses who are happy at the victory of the king and are waiting to welcome his return to the palace.

The *Rājaviṣaya Nāṭaka* is a drama describing contemporary history by way of a discussion about the eligibility of the Ambaṣṭas or the Vaiśyas to wear sacred thread and perform the Vedic sacrifices. The author's name is not available, nor is the play complete. Mahārāja Rājavallabha is the hero of the play, and the theme is the performance of a sacrifice which is said to be very difficult to perform in the Kali age. It gives much information about the various rituals in the course of the sacrifice. But there is no mention of any female character as far as the available portion of the play goes. It ends abruptly while the city of Vikramapura and Mahārāja Rājavallabha are being praised highly.

It may not be out of place here to say a few words about the hero of the play, who is an historical figure. Mahārāja Rājavallabha was a leading political figure in Bengal in the middle of the eighteenth century. He was born in about 1707 A. D. in a village called Beel-Daonia, which was later adorned by him with fine buildings and temples and renamed as Rājanagara. He was a keen social reformer, much ahead of his age. He tried to introduce widow-remarriage, though in the long run he failed. However, it is interesting to note that his activities were recalled and his verses quoted as authority a century later, when the great Īśvaracandra Vidyāsāgara made a more successful attempt in the same direction. R. C. Majumdār and K. G. Goswāmī are of the opinion that "This drama may almost be said to be the last literary work composed in Sanskrit in Bengal in the pre-British period."¹

Now we pass on to the type of plays called *Nāṭikas*,

1. The Preface to the *Rājaviṣaya Nāṭaka*.

which we find in abundance during this period. The reason of partiality to this type may be the very nature of *Nāṭikas*. As we have already noticed, while dealing with the first of the kind, the *Priyadarśikā* of Śrī Harṣa, this type has its own peculiarities which attract the common man more easily. This type of play is more gay, attractive and enjoyable. Fun and frolic can find an easy way into such a type and, being light-hearted, can be easily passed on to the audience without dire consequences. We shall take up a few of these plays only for study, because they are more or less stereotyped, as we shall presently see.

The *Pārijātamanjarī* is a *Nāṭikā* in two parts inscribed on two stones. Only one of the stones is found till now; hence only the first two acts of the play are available to us for study. The story is more or less the same as that of the *Karṇasundarī* referred to in the previous chapter. It deals with the love-affair of a contemporary king. The women characters presented, as usual, are : the chief queen, the heroine *Pārijātamanjarī*, her friends and the maids-in-attendance on the queen. The only speciality here is the peculiar way in which the heroine is brought into existence. When the king is entering the palace a garland of *Pārijāta* flowers falls on his breast and turns into a maiden. This girl is *Pārijātamanjarī* or *Vijayaśrī*. The king falls in love with her, after which the usual course of such plays follows.

The *Kamalinīkalahansa* is another play of the same type. The story follows the pattern, the only difference being that the maiden is discovered in a magic lotus given to the chief queen. The rest of the incidents follow closely the *Viddhasālabbhanjikā*, studied in the previous chapter.

The *Mṛgāṅkalekhā* is a court-comedy, written in the later half of the 16th century by poet Viśvanātha. *Mṛgāṅkalekhā* is the daughter of the king of *Kāmarūpa*. *Karpūratilaka*, the king of *Kalinga*, is the hero of the play. The minister, *Ratnacūda*, hearing of the prophecy that *Mṛgāṅka-*

lekḥā's husband would become the ruler of the whole world tries his best to get her married to his own master. Siddhayoginī, a nun, brings the girl into the harem of the Kalinga king and puts her in the protection of the chief queen. The usual things follow until the girl is recognized as a princess and is given in marriage to the king by the queen herself. The incident of a demon, Saṁkha-pāla, taking away the girl, and the king saving her, is added perhaps in imitation of the Kāpālika episode in the Mālatīmādhava.

Mṛgāṅkalekhā, the heroine, Vilāsavatī, the chief queen, the siddhayoginī, the maids-in-attendance—Kalahāṁsikā, Navamālikā, Lavangalatā, and Lambastanī, the wife of Kunderudhira : these are the female characters depicted in the play. All of them are quite familiar to us, as far as their nature and behaviour go. Their manners, actions and reactions seem to be the same, as we have noticed in their predecessors in the earlier plays of the same type. The worst thing is that these characters do not exhibit any real life in them. They seem to be moving rather mechanically and automatically. As they have no individuality of their own there hardly exists any scope or necessity of separate or individual study of these characters.

There are numerous *Nāṭikās* based on the story of Kṛṣṇa's life in Gokula. Of these, the earliest available is the *Kuvalayavatī*, which is also called the *Ratnapāñcalikā*, written by Singa Bhūpāla, whose time is decided by scholars as the 14th century. At the instance of Brahmā, Bhūmī assumes the form of a maiden and Nārada takes her to Dwārakā and leaves her under the protection of Rukmiṇī. He gives the girl a magic ring which, when she wears, makes her appear to males as a doll of precious stones—a Ratnapāñcalikā—and saves her from the unwanted attention of men. A chance visit of the girl to the palace-garden brings about a meeting with Kṛṣṇa and mutual love is the result. The first meeting becomes the forerunner to many more, and

Satyabhāmā drops in at one of these, even as Irāvati in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. Rukmiṇī, the chief among Kṛṣṇa's queens, imprisons Kuvalayāvatī to please Satyabhāmā. The brother of Kālyavāna, the Rākṣasa, tries to kidnap her. The timely realisation of the danger by Rukmiṇī makes it possible for Kṛṣṇa to interfere and the girl is rescued by the hero. In the meantime, Nārada returns and informs the chief queen that Kuvalayāvatī is none other than Bhūmi herself, and Rukmiṇī, with the permission of all the co-queens led by Satyabhāmā, offers the girl to her husband.

As can be easily seen, the story follows the works of Bhāsa and Kālidāsa with similar themes, even to the extent of similarity in expressions. The characters depicted also resemble the parallel characters in the respective works. Kuvalayāvatī, Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā are the chief women characters, while the others are the friends of the heroine or the maids-in-attendance at the harem. Kuvalayāvatī is a beautiful girl with all the good qualities expected in a girl of a good family. And she behaves exactly to pattern. She is humble, timid and bashful, gets frightened at the slightest opportunity and falls readily in love with the hero, as soon as she meets him. Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā, the queens of Kṛṣṇa, are brought to the ordinary level of jealous wives by the poet, though he tries to keep up the status of Rukmiṇī by making her behave more like queen Dhārīṇī, as depicted by Kālidāsa, than by bringing her to the level of Vāsavadattā, as portrayed by Śrī Harṣa. Satyabhāmā seems to be the mild prototype of Irāvati or Queen Auśinārī, portrayed by Kālidāsa.

A close study of these prominent female characters tells us that though the conception of women has undergone a change for the worse and though they have come to be considered as only the objects of enjoyment by men, the ideals held up by the earlier poets, such as Kālidāsa and Bhāsa, still held the attention of the thinking minds. To bring down

those ideals still lower would have been against the very fundamentals of all that Bhāratavarṣa stood for; because from the very earliest times men and women were always considered as supplements and complements to each other. However much the interested people tried to reduce the women to the status of dust, the heart of Bhārata was against such an injustice. So the literature, which is the reflection of the mind and moods of society, could not stoop to that level. These Nāṭikās which took their themes from all sorts of places did not hesitate to bring down Kṛṣṇa and even the ideal king, Rāma, to the level of the ordinary pleasure-loving men, yet they could not paint women in a demeaning way. The worst they could do was to portray them as love-sick and ready to commit suicide if their desires were unattainable. The young girls—the friends and attendants—such as Candralekhā, Candrikā, Kastūrikā, Ghanasārikā and others are, one and all, the ideal friends and servants who have only the welfare of their own respective mistresses at heart. They are very devoted and loyal and would go to any extent to do a good turn to the latter. None of them seem to have any individual existence of their own apart from that of the one they seek to serve.

The *Vṛṣabhānujā* is another Nāṭikā based on the story of Kṛṣṇa. The love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is the main theme, and this being a Nāṭikā, the hero has to belong to the Dhīralalita type. Rādhā, the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu, her friends and a Parivrājikā, called Vrindā, are the female characters depicted. The story develops in a very stereotyped way. All the girls are maidens and seem to be well-versed in fine arts, such as, drawing, painting, singing and making garlands of beautiful designs. Not few of them have taste for literature also. On many occasions we hear Candrakalā, Nāgarikā and some other friends of Rādhā changing over to Sanskrit. They are able to talk in verses also. This may be an indication of the poet's difficulty in composing verses in

Prākṛt or it may be that the people were not so very strict as to make women talk only in Prākṛt. However that may be, the fact remains that in the later dramas we have more of Sanskrit and less of Prākṛt spoken by all characters. In this play, we see Rādhā and Campakalatā composing verses in Sanskrit. We have seen that Śakuntalā was able to write a love-letter in verse to Duṣyanta. But that was in Prākṛt. Here, Rādhā and Campakalatā are writing verses in Sanskrit.

The period, in which these and other plays, based on the life of Kṛṣṇa were written, is accepted to be the 16th and 17th centuries of the Christian era when the Vaiṣṇava cult, specially the devotion to Kṛṣṇa, was in full swing all over India. All these plays describe Kṛṣṇa as a boy or youth in Gokula, with the clear indication of his being the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Also in the Nāṭikā under study, we have the indications of this conception. But the main theme is the love of two beautiful young people and their marriage according to Gāndharva Vidhi. The expression of erotic sentiment and description of the pangs of separation, favourite with the poets, are allowed full play. This is more poetry than drama, as most of the plays written during this period happen to be. No useful purpose, therefore, can be served from the standpoint of our study in looking into the character delineation or development of the plot here. Of course, here, once again, we are told by the Sutrādhāra in very clear terms that the female roles are to be played by males¹,

1. अ. सूत्रधारः—आर्ये किमत्र कालातिपातेन । नन्वेषः विरचितवृन्दावेषः
समागत एव ममान्तेवासी मधुरप्रियो गृहीततत्सहचरीवन-
रक्षिकाभूमिकश्च सखा मे रङ्गमङ्गलः । V. Bh. 1

आ. नटः—सौगतजरत्प्रव्राजिकायाः कामन्दक्यास्तु प्रथमां भूमिकां भाव
एक एवाधीते । तदन्तेवासिन्यास्त्वहमवलोकितायाः ।

सूत्रधारः—बाढम् । एषोऽस्मि कामन्दकी संवृतः ।

नटः—अहमप्यवलोकिता ।

M. M. I. p. 16-18

which reminds us of the similar passages in the *Mālatī-mādhava* of Bhavabhūti.

The *Kaṁsavadha* by Śrī Śeṣakṛṣṇa deals with the incidents of the life of Kṛṣṇa at Gokula till the killing of Kaṁsa. Women characters are few. Vilāsavatī, the messenger from Rādhā to Kṛṣṇa, Kubjā, Yaśodā and Devakī are the ones that are depicted. When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are starting off to Mathurā in the company of Akrūra, we see Yaśodā and Nandagopa following them to some distance. Both of them are stricken with sorrow due to the separation of their beloved sons. But it is Yaśodā who makes a heroic effort to control her feelings and to console others. Though the separation of the children, the very life of their lives, is breaking her heart, Yaśodā remembers that their sorrow would affect the departing boys adversely. We see Nanda becoming unconscious again and again, but Yaśodā takes courage due to her extreme love which makes her forget the self for the sake of the beloveds. She remembers the harm that can come to the children who are going to the enemy's camp, and realises that prayer and good wishes alone can help them. So, she says: "Let us control ourselves and strengthen them by our blessings. Let us please the family deities and propitiate the Brāhmaṇas who will do the *swastika vacana* for their sake. Let us give presents to married women. They will ensure the children's welfare. So, hurry, and let us go home, soon."¹

And again, when they approach the vicinity of Gokula and see the deserted appearance of the place, with men and

1. यशोदा—आर्य, समाश्वसिहि, समाश्वसिहि । अयुक्तमिदानीं शोचितुम् ।
 अमङ्गलम् खल्वेतद् प्रवसितानाम् । तद्वर्षयस्व शुभाशीभिः ।
 मानयस्व कुल देवताः । अर्च्यन्तां स्वस्तिवाचनिका ब्राह्मणाः ।
 दीयन्तां वायनानि सौभाग्यवतीनाम् । यथा वत्सानां कल्याणम-
 प्रतिहतं भवति । तद्वच्छावो लघु लघु गृहसंनिवेशम् ।

women weeping and wailing, animals and birds dejected, it is she who rises to the occasion and realising the duty as the mother of Kṛṣṇa and the mistress of Gokula, decides to make an effort to control emotions in order to console the dependents.¹ The sense of responsibility and propriety shown by Yaśodā, as also her presence of mind, are quite remarkable. Devakī, Kṛṣṇa's mother, is a parallel character with the same traits of grace, dignity, nobility and selfless love for children, as seen in this play. She feels sad that she had no opportunity of taking care of and petting her sons in their boyhood and had to spend her days as a barren woman, though she had two sons alive.² And she hastens to satisfy her son who apologises for killing her brother.³ Kṛṣṇa was afraid that his mother may curse him for killing her brother.⁴ But Devakī with great magnanimity and power of under-

1. यशोदा—आर्यं दुष्प्रवेशः खल्वेष घोरतरो घोषप्रदेशः । तथा हि—

नार्यो रुदन्ति न रुवन्ति पतंगसंघा

गावस्तृणानि न चरन्ति न वान्ति वाताः ।

भृङ्गाः पिबन्ति न मधूनि हरौ प्रयाते

निर्जीविता इव दिशः प्रतिभान्ति शून्या ॥

तदद्य वत्सप्रवासशोकावेशविकलवमात्मानमात्मनैवावष्टम्य व्रज-

वासिनो लोकान्परिसान्त्वयावः ।

K. V. IV. p. 40

2. देवकी—नोत्सङ्गे परिशायितौ न च कराङ्गुल्यापि संचारितौ

न स्तन्यंपरिपायितौ न मधुरैर्गीतैश्च संलालितौ ।

सस्नेहं न निरीक्षितौ स्खलितया वाचापि नोल्लापितौ

वन्ध्याया इव वासरा मम गता लब्ध्वा भवन्तौ सुतौ ॥

K. V. VII. 8

3. कृष्णः—(सभयं अञ्जलिं बद्ध्वा)

मातस्ते निहतौ भ्राता दुरात्मा कुलदूषणः ।

मन्युमेनं न मे मन्तुं परं तु क्षन्तुमर्हसि ॥ K. V. VII. 10

4. कृष्णः—(सानन्दनम्) उज्जीवितोऽस्मीदानीं शापशङ्कातङ्कसंतापात् ।

K. V. VII. p. 88

standing pardons him.¹ All her words are indicative of very laudable qualities. Both these mothers of Kṛṣṇa, as depicted here, are adorable ideals of Indian womanhood which has been always kept unstained by all poets, inspite of the deterioration in the condition of women in general in the later periods.

Vilāsavatī and Kubjā are the two young women presented in the play. Of these, one is the childhood friend of Kṛṣṇa and the other a servant in the enemy camp. Both are equally devoted to Kṛṣṇa. Vilāsavatī appears as a messenger between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but Kubjā's devotion is more remarkable, because inspite of being in the service of Kāṁsa she adores Kṛṣṇa and considers it to be her great good fortune to be able to give him the *Angarāga*. She actually forces Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to accept the fragrant decorations prepared by her. When her hunch is referred to, very contentedly she says : "The curves on my body are given to me by my God. How could I help it ?"² Though a simple and unassuming servant woman, she shows an integrity and individuality of her own. Her words and actions impress us in such a way that, when Kṛṣṇa removes her disfigurement, we feel it was only as it should be. She deserved all that and much more from him.

Another noteworthy play is the *Manonuranjanam* by Anantadeva. It deals with the Govardhana episode, described in the Bhāgavata, and also Rāsālilā. The first four acts deal with the story of putting an end to the pride of Indra, as described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.³ In the fifth act the

1. देवकी—वत्स, मैवं वादीः ।

उपभुङ्क्ते निजं कर्म शुभं वा यदि वाशुभम् ।

इहामुत्र च सर्वोऽपि न तत्रान्योऽपराध्यति ॥ K. V. VII. 11

2. कुब्जा—दैवकृतं ममाकृतेर्वक्त्वम् । तत्र मया किं कर्तुं शक्यम् ।

K. V. V. p. 65

3. Bhāgavata Purāṇa. X. 24-27

Rāsalīlā is dramatised.¹ Women characters are brought in only towards the end of the fourth act and throughout the fifth. In the fourth act, while Kṛṣṇa was standing for seven days with the Govardhana mountain held high over the whole of Vraja in order to save the people and all beings there from the heavy rain and thunder storm caused by Indra in his anger, Kāmadhenu comes to worship him, and then follow the gods and the goddesses. In the fifth act, the Gopikās go for their bath in the Yamunā and there, Kṛṣṇa takes away all their clothes and hangs them on a tree nearby. The *Vastraharanalīlā* and the *Rāsalīlā* are described in the fifth act exactly as described in the Bhāgavata. Hence there is no scope of a critical study of any character.

The *Vidagdhamādhavam* by Rūpagoswāmin is based on Kṛṣṇa's love-affairs in Gokula with Rādhā as the main heroine. This play is supposed to be written to please the devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa who had assembled in the vicinity of Keśitīrtha. The main plot is the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Paurṇamāsī is the Parivrājikā who helps Rādhā here, instead of Vrindā in the Vṛṣabhānujā. The theme is developed on the lines of the Mālatīmādhava in the beginning and the earlier authors are imitated in the depiction of one incident after another. Paurṇamāsī reminds us of Kāmandakī with her retinue. We have the general outline of the whole story in the stanza recited by the Sūtradhāra, as he describes the season.² In this, perhaps, he is taking

1. Bhāgavata. X. 33

2. सूत्रधारः —मारिष, पश्य पश्य ।

सौज्यं वसन्तसमयः समयाय यस्मि-

न्पूर्णं तमीश्वरमुपोढनवानुरागम् ।

गूढग्रहा रुचिरया सह राघयासी

रङ्गाय संगमयिता निशि पौर्णमासी ॥

example from the *Veṇīsaṃhāra*,¹ which we have already studied. The conversation between Paurṇamāsī and her disciple, Nāndimukhī,² is an imitation of the conversation between Kāmandakī and Avalokitā in the *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti.³

The main peculiarity of all these plays with Kṛṣṇa as the hero is that all these accept Him as the incarnation of the Supreme Being and everything done to please Kṛṣṇa in any way is justified, because devotion to the Lord is shown as the underlying and prompting cause.

There is a very noticeable difference in this play from all the others, we have hitherto studied. All the heroines we have seen uptill now were loyal and devoted to their respective husbands or lovers, as the case may be. But in the *Vidagdhamādhava* for the first time we have a woman married to one man, depicted as falling in love with another. Rādhā here, is the wife of Abhimanyu, and she is deliberately brought into contact with Kṛṣṇa by her friends and also by Parivrājikā, Paurṇamāsī. In the *Bhāgavata*, it is stated that all the women in Gokula ran to him in the night, hearing the flute, and they would not stop even when prevented by their husbands, brothers and fathers.⁴ There, the verses are pregnant with meanings of a spiritual nature. The idea there, is much beyond what the words convey. But in this play the physical side is more emphasised and Rādhā, the wife of Abhimanyu, is portrayed as suffering from the pangs of separation from another man, though he is Kṛṣṇa himself. There is no attempt on the part of anybody to explain this

1. सूत्रधारः—तथा ह्यस्यां शरदि—

सत्पक्षा मधुरगिरः प्रसाधिताशा मदोद्धतारम्भाः ।

निपतन्ति धार्तराष्ट्राः कालवशान्मेदिनीपृष्ठे ॥ V. S. I. 6

2. V. M. I. p. 10-17

3. M. M. I. p. 19-35

4. ता वार्यमाणाः पतिभिः पितृभ्रातृबन्धुभिः ।

गोविन्दापहृतात्मानो न न्यवर्तन्त मोहिताः ॥

Bh. P. X. 29-8

as a spiritual union of the Jivātmā and Paramātmā. Rādhā is again and again blaming herself for being thus attracted towards another man, which act is not at all suitable to a virtuous woman. This propagation of immorality in the name of Bhakti cult seems rather strange.

Another peculiarity in this play is that, though the hero is really head over ears in love with the heroine, he is all the time pretending to be a staunch celibate. He states clearly, "I do not think of touching women even in dreams.¹" The whole play is an imitation of Jayadevas *Gita-Govinda* to a great extent. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the center of attraction for all women in Gokula. Candrāvalī is another Gopikā who is portrayed here as the rival of Rādhā. Jaṭilā and Karālā, the respective mothers-in-law of Rādhā and Candrāvalī, are very anxious to keep the girls away from Kṛṣṇa. But the Parivrājikā, Paurṇamāsī, the Vanadevatā, Vrindā and the respective friends of the two are vying with each other in uniting their respective favourites with the all-pervading Lover of Gokula.

The play is swarming with women, while Subalā, Śrīdāmā or Sudāmā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Abhimanyu are the only male characters presented. This seems to be more an opera than a drama. There is actually no development of character nor any reflection of reality. The erotic sentiment predominates and the general atmosphere is of gaiety and hilarious enjoyment. The girls depicted are all well-versed in fine arts, even as seen in the Nāṭikā, *Uṛṣabhānujā*. They can sing, dance, paint and make beautiful designs of garlands. They are very clever at disguising men as women, as is witnessed from the disguise of Subalā and Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā and Goddess Gaurī respectively. They are experts in making garlands of various designs and also in decorating the body with flowers and leaves. Here, in this play, we have one

1. कृष्णः—सखे, जानतापि भवता किमिदमन्याय्यमुपन्यस्तम् । न खलु स्वप्नेऽपि मया कामिनीस्पर्शः स्मर्यते । V. M. II. p. 68

more example of men disguising as women, which we see, off and on, ever since Bhavabhūti's time.

As for the character, manners and customs of the women or, for that matter, any personae of this drama, it is hardly useful to discuss. The whole plot is based on the Purāṇic story, about the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and takes us far away from the reality, giving no true picture of the society of the times, except that it indicates the trend of the Bhakti cult. It is only the dramatisation of a story to eulogise and propagate Kṛṣṇa Bhakti which is sought to be done by the easy means of giving enjoyment to the ordinary minds, who would not dive deep into anything.

The *Rukmiṇīpariṇaya* by Prince Rāmavarmā of Travancore deals with the story of the marriage of Rukmiṇī with Kṛṣṇa. The poet is said to have lived in the 18th century, A. D.

Rukmiṇī and her two friends, Navamālikā and Anangasenā, are the only female characters depicted in this play. The theme is the well-known story of Rukmiṇī being taken away by Kṛṣṇa at her request, as is found in the Bhāgavata.¹ Rukmiṇī is a princess—beautiful, intelligent, obedient to her elders, loving to her friends and very considerate and kind to her servants and dependents. But when it comes to her marriage, she is courageous enough to take the law into her own hands. The author has made a few changes in portraying the characters. In the original story, Rukmiṇī sends a Brāhmaṇa to Kṛṣṇa with the message and request that he should come and take her away by the *Rākṣasa Vidhi* of marriage.² But in this play it is Uddhava who sends the letter to Kṛṣṇa at the instigation of Navamālikā, the friend of Rukmiṇī. Even that letter is within the limits of propriety, because Uddhava only informs Kṛṣṇa about the

1. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X. 52-53

2. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X. 52, 26-44

intention of Rukmi, the brother of Rukmiṇī, to give his sister in marriage to Śiśupāla; and he requests Kṛṣṇa to be present in Vidarbha at the time of the intended marriage. The consent of Rukmiṇī is only suggested by the meaningful words, "by the friends of the maiden"¹ in the message, when enumerating the people who wished to see Rukmiṇī married to Kṛṣṇa.

The modesty and dignity required in the behaviour of a maiden is kept up in all the words and deeds of Rukmiṇī even though she is depicted as suffering the pangs of separation and is in constant fear of being married to Śiśupāla. As all the princesses shown in the later Sanskrit plays, she is also well-versed in all fine arts, and she is able to draw a picture of Kṛṣṇa as she saw him after she was saved from the Śalva king, who tried to take her away.

Navamālikā, the friend and attendant of Rukmiṇī, is a courageous and resourceful girl. Every time the Princess loses heart, it is she who cheers her up and strengthens her hopes with the promise that she herself would try and fulfil the desires of Rukmiṇī at any cost.² And true to her words, she achieves ultimately, what formerly seemed to be impossible, by the bold step of disguising Anangasenā as Rukmiṇī and taking her back to the palace to be married to Śiśupāla, after handing over the real princess to Vāsubhadra in the temple. Navamālikā, as seen in this play, is not only a real friend and a loyal servant, but also very unique in her skill.

Anangasenā also shows more or less the same characteristics. Of course she does not appear on the stage much, but her readiness to replace Rukmiṇī in order to defeat the

1. "कन्यकालीजनाः ।"

R. P. I. p. 4

2. नवमालिका—मा विषादं कुरु । विप्रतीपं कुमारमपि प्रतापं तवामिलषितं सम्पादयामि ।

R. P. III. p. 31

नवमालिका—मा उत्ताप्य । सर्वथा तवामिलषितं सम्पादयामि ।

R. P. III. p. 32

plans of Rukmi is indeed praiseworthy. Both these girls seem to be of noble birth and well-bred, with strong and laudable characters. The pictures of these three women, as seen in this play, tell us a different story from what we had been hearing hitherto. They do not impress us as mere companions in pleasure alone, able to weep, wail or swoon when some little mishap comes to them, but have courage, resourcefulness and presence of mind when necessary, though generally they prefer to remain in the background and allow things to take their own course.

In this connection it would, perhaps, not be out of place to point out that the poets of Kerala were always a little partial to the episodes connected with Rukmiṇī, Subhadrā, Satyabhāmā etc. The hows and whys of this are not far to seek. This remote corner in the south of India has always been the sanctuary for freedom, heroism and dignity of women. Never in the history of this country, women were subjected to seclusion or servility. Matriarchal system being the prevalent custom, women always enjoyed comparative freedom. This must account for the more healthy and daring pictures of women in the literature of this part. The characters of Rukmiṇī, Subhadrā, Draupadī, Damayantī and similar other bold women seem to have attracted the Southern stage more than that of the North. Rukmiṇīpariṇaya and Subhadrāharṇa are familiar themes for the performances in the temple-yards, namely, *Kuthu*, *Kuṭiyattam*, *Kathakam* and *Tullal*.

Incidentally, in the above-mentioned play we get a glimpse of the marriage custom of the South also. Worshipping the family-deity by the girl is really a page taken from the Epics. But this is a widely observed custom in Kerala, and in the erstwhile royal families of the state also. Rukmiṇī's visit to the temple of Gaurī is described in the Bhāgavata and the message of Rukmiṇī brought by the Brāhmaṇa clearly inspires Kṛṣṇa to make use of this opportunity to

carry her away. But the procession described in this play reminds one of the royal processions prevalent in the various South Indian states, specially Travancore state of old. While decorating the bride in the temple, Navamālikā says to Rukmiṇī, "These are the ornaments sent by your maternal uncle's wife; wear them and give away your old ornaments to the faithful Anangasena."¹ This statement here seems to suggest two purposes: firstly, the impending guise of Rukmiṇī to get away from the undesirable marriage and secondly, evidence of the custom of the maternal uncle and his wife giving necessary ornaments to the bride at the time of the marriage. It is to be remembered here that in Kerala, till recent years the mother's brother was equally responsible for the welfare of the niece, along with her father.

There are many more plays with the story of Kṛṣṇa as the central theme. But as has already been noticed, they exhibit a slavish conformity to the rules and regulations laid down by the dramaturgists, and have nothing much to add to the information we have already gathered.

Apart from the three main types, the *Nāṭaka*, the *Prakarāṇa* and the *Nāṭikā*, there are many more types of plays ordained by the law-givers of the dramatic arena. And all these types find their examples in form also. But it is not necessary to take up all these types for our study here, as, many of them do not present women characters, and those that do call for the depiction of them, do not show varieties useful enough for critical study. The few that permit of such a study are taken up here one by one.

The *Adbhutarpaṇa* is a play which shows many peculiarities, attracting our attention to a certain extent. The theme centers round the incidents described in the Yuddha-

1. नवमालिका—एतान्यनर्घाणि भूषणानि तव मातुलान्या प्रेषितानि ।
एतैस्तवं नैपथ्यं करोमि । तवाभरणान्यनङ्गसेनाया भवन्तु ।

kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa, especially the battle of Lankā and Rāma's return to Ayodhyā. Sītā, Saramā, Trijaṭā, Śūrpaṇakhā, Lankā, and Nikumbhilā are the female characters presented on the stage. Lankā, being the scene of action, it is but natural that most of the characters belong to it. Saramā and Trijaṭā are shown as the two real friends of Sītā who is a prisoner in the Aśokavāṭikā of Rāvaṇa. She is surrounded by Rākṣasa women who are trying to make her accept Rāvaṇa out of fear or by love. All the incidents on the battle-field are shown to Sītā by Trijaṭā and Saramā, while Rāvaṇa, his friend Mahodara, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are hidden witnesses to the whole performance. There is a free play of the *Rākṣasī Māyā* in the *Nāṭaka*, which describes the incidents of the Yuddhakāṇḍa in the long course of ten acts. Though it is called a *Nāṭaka* by the author, its nature prompts us to suggest another classification, the propriety of which we may be able to discuss better at a later stage. The characters have their own reflections acting in front of them, either by *Māyā* or through the reflection in the magic-mirror. Much confusion is caused by the use of this wonder-mirror, and many confusing situations are cleared also. This 'Adbhutadarpaṇa' serves to save the greatest of women, whose character was suspected, perhaps due to circumstances or to the changing times.

Sītā, the ideal of Indian womanhood, is portrayed here in the same way as in the *Ādi Kāvya*, the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. Her gentleness, grace, loving nature and kindness are boundless. Her purity, chastity and dignity are unparalleled and her courage is undaunted, as it should be. Rāma and Rāma alone rules in her heart; her thoughts, words and deeds all center round him. He is made an eye-witness to all she had to undergo in the captivity of Rāvaṇa. There we get a glimpse of the society, because even while he is an eye-witness to the happenings in the Aśokavāṭikā, he has the forebodings about the possible scandals as a result of the period which Sītā has to spend in this place. He says : "I knew

Sītā well enough even before. But I am worried as to what will be in the minds of the people.”¹ Every time there is a fresh proof of Sītā’s unblemished chastity, Lakṣmaṇa draws Rāma’s attention to it; but the answer is always the same: “The people are to be convinced.”² Or, that “the Ikṣvāku kings accept only that which is accepted by their people willingly.”³ This feeling in the mind of Rāma finally reaches its climax and causes the harsh words of abandonment to Sītā, which make her enter the fire.⁴ The episode of the fire-ordeal is described here as in the Rāmāyaṇa and Rāma accepts her back only after her purity is proclaimed by the Fire-god⁵

1. रामः —(विश्वस्य स्वगतम्)

प्रागेव सीतां जानेऽहं पश्यामि च तथैव ताम् ।

किन्तु लोकस्य हृदये किमस्तीति विचिन्तये ॥

A. D. VI. 27

2. रावणः —(विश्वस्य)

वञ्चिता पतिरूपेण मया तास्ताः पतिव्रताः ।

यया हि मायया सास्यां मम कुण्ठीभवत्यहो ॥

लक्ष्मणः —श्रुतमार्येण ।

रामः —वत्स, कः सन्देहः पातिव्रत्ये सीतायाः, पावनत्वे च भगवत्या

भागीरथ्याः । (स्वगतम्) किं तु लोकः प्रमाणीकर्तव्यः ।

A. D. VII. p. 83

3. रामः —वत्स, किमत्र श्रोतव्यम् ।

प्रागेव जातवृत्तायाः प्रस्तुतानुगुणा कथा ।

किन्तु लोकप्रमाणा हि कृत्येष्विदृशकवो नृपाः ॥

A. D. VII. 5

4. (नेपथ्ये) अहो बत देवी सीता—

मदान्धरक्षोगृहवासदोषशङ्कानुषक्तेन रघूद्वहेन ।

त्यक्ता समक्षं महतो जनस्य त्यजत्यहो देहमियं हुताशे ॥ A. D. X. 9

5. (नेपथ्ये) भो भो रामचन्द्र—

जातः पङ्क्तिरथस्य पायसवपुर्मुक्तो हि यज्ञे भवा-

न्सीतियं जनकस्य देवयजनक्षेत्रात्किलाजायत ।

and an order is given by his father Daśaratha.¹ Thus we see that the ideals upheld are the same, as also the incidents described. The picture of Sītā is glorious and ennobling, as ever. But the way in which all this is expressed, and portrayed has its own story to tell about the society and the people who witnessed the play.

Trijaṭā and Saramā behave as true friends of Sītā, and their happiness and sorrow follow the feelings of their prisoner. They are appointed to look after Sītā as the agents of Rāvaṇa, but they use their good services to keep Sītā alive and console her. This actually brings forth Rāvaṇa's displeasure on them, but they still persist in the cause they espoused of their own accord. With the use of the 'Adbhuta-darpaṇa', or the Wonder-Mirror, which was to be used to convince Sītā of Rāvaṇa's invincibility, they show to Sītā the whole truth and thus prevent her from ending her life and keep up her spirit till Rama's arrival.

Nikumbhilā and Lankā are the city deities personified, as Alakā and Lankā in the Mahāvīracarita, the Anargha-rāghava and similar works. They do not show any special characteristics. They are sad due to the death of Indrajit and Rāvaṇa, but finally accept the inevitable and decide to go in attendance on Sītā and finally join in the celebrations of Vibhīṣaṇa's coronation.

Śurpaṇakhā is also brought here, though none of the earlier works present her in this context. After the carrying away of Sītā, Śurpaṇakhā is not seen either in the Rāmāyaṇa or even in the Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi, where Śurpaṇakhā is shown

तत्त्यक्त्वा पुरुषान्तरव्यवहिति रूपान्तरव्याजम-

प्यायेयं मुनिदेवसंसदि गुणश्लाघ्या मया दीयते ॥

A. D. X. 12

1. (नेपथ्ये)

ऋषिदेवगणानुमोदितां गिरमग्नेरविशङ्कितं कुरु ।

भजतामनया समं भवानभिषेकोत्सवमस्मदीप्सितम् ॥ A. D. X. 17

at her worst. But in this play, Śūrpaṇakhā is the cause of all troubles that come upon Sītā. This sister of Rāvaṇa takes to Sītā the head and bow of Rāma, created by Maya, and tells her that Rāma is killed in the battle. She never fails to pain Sītā, whenever she gets an opportunity. She seems to be a personification of jealousy, hatred and cruelty. When Sītā falls unconscious at the sight of the head of Rāma, shown to her at the instigation of Vidvijihva, all the Rākṣasa women take her to be dead and they are afraid. But Śūrpaṇakhā is happy and says: "Why are you bothered? We have got nice human flesh to eat!"¹ Only the timely reminder by the other Rākṣasa women, that if Rāvaṇa came to know that Sītā died in this way he would throw them all alive to dogs believing that they killed her to eat, stopped Śūrpaṇakhā from eating her up.²

She is ready to carry out any evil deed and is disliked even by her own people, as is clear from their words from time to time. The Rākṣasa women call her the cause of trouble—*Anarthakāriṇī*. Maya thinks, if not for Śūrpaṇakhā's unfulfilled desire for Rāma, Lankā and the King of Lankā would not have come to grief.³ Even after the death of Rāvaṇa, Śūrpaṇakhā is not prepared to fall back. As Maya says,⁴ she is still anxious for revenge.

1. शूर्पणखा—किंनिमित्तो विचारो युष्माकम् । ननु शोभन उपलब्धोऽस्माकं
मानुषस्य मांसाहारः । A. D. V. p. 59

2. राक्षस्यः—अयि मूढे ! अनर्थकारिणी शूर्पणखे, भक्षणनिमित्तं युष्माभि-
र्मरिता जानकीति परिकुपितो भर्ता जीवन्तीरेवास्मान्कुक्कुराणां
भक्षणं कारयिष्यति । तत्समरगतस्य मर्तुः पुरत एतं जानकी-
वृत्तान्तं निवेदयामः । A. D. V. p. 59

3. मयः—रामो वा त्वां वृषस्यन्तीं लक्ष्मणो वा भजेत चेद् ।

न सीतापहृतास्य स्यान्न च स्याद्रक्षसां वधः ॥ A. D. X. 6

4. मयः—स्त्रीस्वभावस्थिताप्येषा जातैका जातिगन्धिनी ।

सेयं प्रतिक्रियावेशपिशाचग्रहमोहिता ॥ A. D. X. 2

She decides to try her utmost to stop the re-union of Rāma and Sītā, and she instigates Mandodari's father Maya, to disguise as Rāma and make Sītā enter the fire by telling her that she could in no way be accepted by him. Of course, they need not pursue their plan, for their intentions are fulfilled by real Rāma himself. Śurpaṇakhā is happy beyond bounds, to hear the news of Sītā's falling into the fire, but that happiness is short-lived, because Sītā is brought back to Rāma by the Fire-god and declared to be pure and un-blemished. Only when all doors are closed, she resigns to the fate and follows Maya to submit to the service of Vibhīṣaṇa.

Thus we see that though the marvellous and miraculous elements are introduced to create the sense of wonder in the minds of the audience, the traditional characteristics of the main characters are maintained. Still, it is not the same atmosphere and same conditions of society that we witness in these later plays. For example, though Sītā is the same noble and divine ideal, always above suspicion, still, at every step, we hear of the doubts as to what people will say.

Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, Hanumān and Vibhīṣaṇa, are all anxious that proof should be obtained as to the purity of the one who is purer than the fire and the air. At every step fresh proofs are searched to support the self-evident fact. On occasions, frequently repeated, we hear Rāma saying, "but I wonder what people would say!" Herein lies the anomaly—the helplessness of woman. The weak and unprotected woman has to suffer, while man sits in judgement. It is this particular aspect of womanhood that is seen clearly in the *Adbhutadarpaṇa*.

We have seen a similar situation in the *Āścaryacudāmaṇi*. But there the Rākṣasi Māyā is detected by the help of the magic ring and the magic crest-jewel. There,

we saw how the *Angarāga*, given by Anasūyā to Sītā, which was intended as a blessing itself turned into a thing of curse at the end, when Sītā was seen by Rāma immediately after Rāvaṇa was killed. In none of the earlier plays do we hear the harsh, unbecoming words of Rāma to Sītā. It is for the first time in this play, written in the later centuries, that we hear such an elaborate description of this and also of the consequent fire-ordeal. It is significant to note that even in the *Āścaryacūdāmaṇi*, it was the beautiful and adorned appearance of Sītā that created the desire in Rāma's heart, for asking Sītā to undergo the fire-ordeal. But, coming down to the time of the *Adbhutadarpaṇa*, we find that the very incident of Sītā having been in the captivity of Rāvaṇa is enough to make her the target of suspicion and scandal.

In this incident, we have the seeds of the future happenings that are described in the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa. It is interesting to note the trends of thought that grew in connection with these incidents. By the 15th century we have quite a number of versions of this scandal about Sītā and her banishment. There is the usual story of the Dhobī and his wife wherein the Dhobī is made to say that he was not Rāma to accept back the wife who stayed in another man's house even for a day. The expression at once reminds us of a similar statement found in the Rāmāyaṇa, "What the king does has to be followed by the people. In this case, we may also have to bear with our wives when they go astray."¹ In later periods the story becomes more colourful. Sītā is asked to draw the picture of Rāvaṇa by her mother-in-law in one place, by her sister-in-law in another place, by her co-wives in a third place. This picture is brought to the notice of Rāma, and Sītā is banished. No, not only that. Lakṣmaṇa is asked to cut her head off and show

1. अस्माकमपि दारेषु सहनीयं भविष्यति ।

यथा हि कुस्ते राजा प्रजास्तदनुवर्तते ॥

to Rāma the blood on the sword. But all these stories came into existence only very late—later than the 15th century.¹ In any case, there is nothing wrong in concluding that this is another evidence of the deterioration in the condition of women.

Now, going back to *Adbhutadarpaṇa*, there is another peculiarity to be noted. Every where we see shadows or reflections. In the course of our studies, we have come across a term, *Chhāyā Nāṭaka*, which literarily would mean "Shadow Play." Different commentators explain this term in different ways. Abhinavaguptācārya, explaining the 368th verse in the 4th chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, gives a detailed explanation.² Śrī Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara says that, this *Chhāyā Nāṭaka* is not included in the *Rūpakas* accepted by the rhetoricians. His opinion is that this term can apply only to those plays wherein images or puppets are used in place of actors. Wilson's "Theatre" also explains this name and indicates, that in such plays, puppets are generally used. However it may be, we have to accept some kind of performance which went in the form and name of *Chhāyā Nāṭaka*, or Shadow Play, because, we have at least four of this type namely, Subhāṭa's *Dutāṅgada* and Vyāsa Ramadeva's *Subhadrāpariṇaya*, *Pandavabhyudaya* and *Rāmabhyudaya*.

Here we are confronted with a very interesting question. If we are to accept the literal meaning of the Shadow

1. Camil Bulke : *Rāmakathā*, p. 467

2. छायानाटकं तावन्नाटकच्छायात्मना परिकल्पिते काष्ठपुत्तलिकानृत्ये चित्रपटपदर्शने उपचर्यते, "छायानाटकं तावन्नाटकस्य बाह्यं रूपमुत्सववरयात्रादिषु विष्कम्भकात्मना प्रयुज्यते" इति प्रतिपादितम् ।

नाट्यशास्त्रग्रन्थेषु छायानाटकशब्देन नेदं रूपकेषु परिगणितं दृश्यते । श्रीमन्महाभारतव्याख्याता श्री नीलकण्ठचतुर्दरः (१२, २६५-५) रूपोपजीवनं जलमण्डपिकेति दाक्षिणात्येषु प्रसिद्धम्, तत्र सूक्ष्मवस्त्रं व्यवधाय चर्ममयैराकारैः राजामात्यादीनां चर्या प्रदर्श्यते । इति

Play or *Chhāyā Nāṭaka*, that name can be well given to the *Adbhutadarpaṇa*, because wherever there is the original, we have the play of the shadows too. Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Rāvaṇa, Indrajit—all are duplicated, either by the wonder-mirror or by the illusion created by the Rākṣasas. Thus, being full of shadows or reflections, this *Nāṭaka* could rightly be given this name. But we see no indication of such a name having been given. On the other hand, the plays mentioned above, which also take their themes from the Epics, are called *Chhāyā Nāṭaka* by the respective Sūtradhāras, which name does not suit any of them whatever the explanation given to this word may be. There is nothing to indicate the existence of puppets or shadows, in those plays.

Anantarāma Śāstri in his introduction to the *Dutāṅgada* says, that, *Chhāyā Nāṭaka* has neither been described nor stated as such any where. But in the early times, we hear, such plays were staged in the islands of Jāvā and Bālī. Holding a curtain at the front and presenting characters on the stage, so as to reflect the shadows on the curtain with accompanying songs and dialogues etc., seems to have been a popular practice. The actions of the characters reflected on the curtain in the form of shadows, presenting the story as a continuous series of pictures, therefore, must have been the form of the *Chhāyā Nāṭaka*.¹ Perhaps, these are the arts which finally developed into the movies and talkies of the

1. छायानाटकस्वरूपं च किमपि कुत्रापि न प्रपञ्चितम् । श्रूयते प्राचीनकाले यव (जावा) द्वीपे नाटकानीहशान्यभिनीयन्ते स्म । तत्र किल रङ्गस्थले पात्राणां प्रवेशमप्रदर्श्य नेपथ्याभ्यन्तर एव जवनिकासमीपेऽवस्थितानां तेषां वाचिकाद्यभिनयविशेषाः प्रकल्प्यमानाः अन्तःस्थ प्रदीपप्रकाशः प्रभावेण बहिः पटोपरि प्रतिबिम्बिताः सन्तः सामाजिकानां पुरः स्पष्टरूपेणोपस्थाप्यन्ते । तदानीं परस्परसंवादसङ्गीतवाद्यादिध्वनयोऽपि नेपथ्यसमुद्भूताः सामाजिकैः श्रूयन्ते । छायात्मना पटे प्रतिबिम्बितश्चित्ररूपोऽभिनय एव छायानाटकस्य स्वरूपं व्यपदिश्यते । D. A. Introduction, p. 4

present day. Be that as it may, the plays available to us, do not present any distinct characteristics to differentiate them from other kinds of dramas. The only peculiarity that is specially noticeable in these plays is that no division of acts and scenes is made. The presentation of the play goes on with the characters making their entrance and exit as the occasion demands. It is possible to treat them as something akin to the Shadow Plays of the West or the Puppet Plays existing all over India even to this day. But the stage direction found in these so-called *Chhāyā Nāṭakas*, such as, *Praviśya Paṭikṣeṇa*, *Swagatam*, *Parikramya avalokya cha*, etc., present difficulties. How can these stage directions be useful in a *Chhāyā Nāṭaka*, where only reflections of actors are seen on the curtain and words heard from within the curtain? Then there is the stage direction, *Nepathye* (within the green-room). How does this fit in when everything is heard from within the green-room or *Nepathya* alone? Considering all these points, the only conclusion one can possibly arrive at, is that, there must have existed some theatrical performances in those days which were developed as the talkie cinemas of the present day and called *Chhāyā Nāṭakas*—a perfectly suitable name. There is no doubt that this calls for a careful research in the field of Sanskrit dramas.

Coming back to the main subject of our study, we will take these plays one by one. The *Dūtāṅgada* by Subhāṭa is the first of its type that attracts our attention. All the characters are as normal and common as in all other plays, generally known as *Nāṭakas* or *Rūpakas*.

The *Dūtāṅgada*, which is specifically called a *Chhāyā Nāṭaka* deals with the incidents described in the Yuddha-kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa. Angada is sent as a messenger by Rāma to Rāvaṇa and he is received by the king of Lankā in the presence of Vibhiṣaṇa, Mālyavān and others. Mandodarī, Māyāsītā and a Rākṣasa woman are the only female characters presented.

Mandodarī is presented as a devoted wife and a sensible woman. She tries to convince her husband about the futility of his attempts to tempt Sītā and also of the dangerous consequences possible. She pleads with Rāvaṇa that he should return Sītā to Rāma. But Rāvaṇa dismisses her summarily and she leaves the stage weeping.¹

Māyā Maithilī, the illusionary Sītā, is brought on the stage to make Angada believe that Sītā has already accepted Rāvaṇa's overtures. The extra-ordinarily open and shameless behaviour of that illusionary figure is enough to warn Angada of the deception; but to add to it, a Rākṣasī enters the scene and informs Rāvaṇa that Sītā has decided to commit suicide, because she has lost all hope of meeting Rāma again. This puts the final seal on Angada's conviction that what he sees is but the *Rākṣasī Māyā*.

All these female characters are on the stage only for a few seconds. Mandodarī seems to be the helpless wife who is very devoted to her husband and who is, for the very fact of her love and devotion, suffering ever and anon. *Māyā Maithilī* is just an illusion, a deceptive figure, which once again shows forth a low character of woman, with nothing ennobling about her. The Rākṣasī is only a messenger, who delivers her message and disappears. In representing these characters, the intention of the poet does not seem to be to depict the female character in any detail, but only to introduce them to suit the main theme—the characterisation of Angada and Rāvaṇa. He is more keen on showing how Vibhīṣaṇa was justified in leaving his brother to take refuge with Rāma. Mālyavān and Prahasta also attract his attention by their position as ministers. But Mandodarī, though the queen, seems to be only a figure that rose in his memory because of her constant association with the great king of Lankā and is disposed off easily. The only weapon she possesses to save herself and others from the impending calamity

1. मन्दोदरी वाष्पं विसृजन्ती निष्क्रान्ता ।

D. A. p. 6

is her tears; and even the tears are of no avail when Rāvaṇa does not wish to take notice of them.

The presentation of Māyā Maithilī shows another aspect of woman as a source of temptation. The real Sitā could not show this aspect, and so she is not brought on the stage at all. The illusionary Sitā shows the lower nature of woman trying, by her speech, actions and gestures, to arouse the erotic sentiment in man—to tempt, to seduce. All this leads further to the belief that the female characters presented in this play are not the deliberate creations of the poet, but only the casual reflections of his mental attitude towards womanhood as a whole. He seems to be only following up the story according to his own conceptions and those women characters, who helped the natural development of the course of action, as he wished to depict it, have been portrayed as they came up before his mind's eye. The general trend of thought about women during this period was disparaging; hence there is nothing surprising here if only the tempting or the weeping and wailing side of the woman's nature is portrayed elaborately.

But, there is a silver lining to the clouds too, in that Mandodarī and Sitā both tell us indirectly that they still held their own as women inspite of their fallen condition. Māyā Maithilī can be created by Prahasta and can also be displayed as a tempter before the people; but it can only be an illusion and illusion will have to give way before the truth sooner or later. So, before long, the Rākṣasī enters and announces the determination of the real Sitā to commit suicide rather than to stand insults or continue to suffer the separation from her husband. Similarly, Mandodarī may be helpless to mend the ways of Rāvaṇa, as she should have been able to do as his better-half; but, then, she will not be a party to anything wrong that he does. Whether 'he likes it or not, she will tell him what is good for him and will accept the consequences, even if that means her dismissal

from his presence. Thus, both these queens, even in the worst conditions, are capable of showing the courage of their own convictions, and are firm enough to be always on the right path. It is easy to read these ideas between the lines, whether put in by the poet intentionally or otherwise.

The *Subhadrāparinaya* is another play, called by the same name—*Chhāyā Nāṭaka*, but which is also an ordinary play in two acts. It presents Subhadrā and her friends, Devakī and a few maids-in-attendance.

Subhadrā, the sister of Kṛṣṇa, is in love with Arjuna, who also begins to love her from the moment he sets his eyes on her. The love-sick condition of both is described by their respective friends. Finally, Arjuna decides to carry her away according to the Kṣatriya custom. The Yādavas first try to put up a fight, but are subsequently pacified by Kṛṣṇa and everything ends well in the union of Subhadrā with Arjuna. It is an entertaining play with interesting characterisation. The women characters presented are mere beautiful decorations to the homely set-up, without much energy or life to display. They live and move on the pattern of maidens belonging to noble families. They sing, enjoy the beautiful scenes in the garden, pick flowers and make garlands; they talk about the little happenings of daily life, do *Anangapūjā*, fall in love with the first handsome or heroic man they meet with, and weep or wail if their desires are unattainable; they always look to their friends or dependents to find ways and means for the desired union and finally become happy when by the interference of a kind Providence everything happens just as they wished. Subhadrā, and all her friends behave quite true to this entertaining, yet monotonous pattern. Devakī and Revatī are a bit different, but even they do not arouse much interest. They remind us of the ordinary mother and sister-in-law, we meet with, in our everyday life.

We come across another set of plays in this period.

These may well be classified as the "Allegorical Plays." The first and foremost among them is the *Prabodhacandrodaya* by Kṛṣṇadatta Maithila, popularly known as Kṛṣṇa Miśra. His other play is the *Puranjanacarita*. Many more of the same type came to be written later, some being : the *Sankalpāsūryodaya*, the *Bhāvanāpuruṣottama*, the *Moharājaparājaya*, the *Vidyāparinayaṇam*, the *Amṛtodaya*, the *Jivānanandanam* etc., by various authors. Kṛṣṇa Miśra is believed to have lived in the 18th century and all critics are unanimous in declaring his work, the *Prabodhacandrodaya*, to be the best among its kind.

Though the main subject of this study is limited to the women characters of the Sanskrit stage, it is not possible to review them alone and leave the rest of the set behind. So, we have been all along following the method of studying the whole in general, with particular attention to women characters whenever it was necessary to keep their relative utility in view. This alone seemed to be a sound method of conducting a critical study of this nature. We shall follow the same method here also, though the female characters as such cannot play any important part in the body-plot of the play, in spite of their consistent and constant presence.

For the convenience of study, we would take up the *Puranjanacarita* first, though the *Prabodhacandrodaya* is decidedly the best.

The *Puranjanacarita* dramatises the story of Puranjana, as found in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.¹ Any one, going into a critical study of our ancient books, should be aware that they are more full of significant and meaningful parables than of clear and plain statements. Every sacred truth of philosophy, really difficult for the ordinary intellect to understand, is made more simple and easy of comprehension through parables, fables and examples from ordinary everyday life. Hence, the Epics have become the store-houses of

1. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, IV. Chs. 25-29.

all kinds of possible and impossible stories, verging sometimes on the ridiculous from the standpoint of the critical and unbelieving minds. Thus, the 'Puranjanopākhyāna' in the Bhāgavata is an allegorical story, which tells about the travel of the *Jivātman* in quest of a place to live in, its experiences and the final reunion with the *Paramātman*. Kṛṣṇa Miśra has taken up this story and cleverly enough turned it into a means of combining instruction with enjoyment, thus opening one more way to the propagation of the *Bhakti* and *Vairāgya* cults. The galaxy of Sanskrit dramas found one more added to its numerous types of the *Rūpakas* and *Upārūpakas*. Very soon, there were quite a number of similar plays written by various authors, with the same or similar themes, with all kinds of good and bad qualities personified, making love the main sentiment and marriage or the birth of a son, the final denouement. Here is a very interesting paradox, as is stated by the Sūtradhāra in the *Vidyāparṇiayam* by Anandarāya Makhi. He says—the sentiment is erotic, the theme is philosophical and the intended result is undivided devotion to God.¹ Even a casual reading of these plays would show how true the statement is. Only the form of the play is there, confirming fully to the rules and regulations of dramaturgy; the hero, the heroine, the other helping characters, the five *Sandhis*, the five *Arthaprakṛtis* and all other details are present, just as they should be, according to the dramaturgists. But the spirit, is something very much different from what one expects. All the characters are the personifications of the various abstract qualities or senses i. e., Love, Devotion, Discretion, Greed, Anger etc., or Mind, Intellect, Power of thought, Power of understanding and such other things.

We find any number of female characters portrayed in every one of these plays. In the *Puranjanacarita*, Pura-

1. सूत्रधारः—अद्वैतं वस्तु, शृङ्गारो रसः पराभक्तिं फलमिति सर्वमिदमत्यत्सुतं
दृश्यते ।

janī is the heroine, who is the princess of a city surrendered to Puranjana along with herself. She and her friends are depicted just as any other heroine or princess and retinue of a Nāṭaka. The words and sentiments used are similar to those used in any other play with the erotic sentiment predominant. Still, it is impossible to miss the serious and philosophical import of the whole theme and also the characterisation. The female characters are depicted very much as the real human characters, bubbling with human emotions and feelings. All the same, contempt and aversion seem to surround the very name *Woman* in these plays. No opportunity seems to have been lost for holding up the women to ridicule and for criticising them in general. Though there always have been, and still are, numerous examples of queens ruling their kingdoms with greater skill and efficiency, yet statements like this are not wanting: "It is not possible for women who are naturally weak to rule the kingdom."¹

King Puranjana, who accepts his wife as his only friend, is still diffident and in despair, because he feels sure that she, being a woman, is "weak and cowardly."²

Talking about wives, the explanation given for the word *Dārah* is very significant. It is a pointer to the general attitude towards women. It is said, women are called *Dārah*—those who break,³ because they are very clever in breaking up friendships and are skilful in separating the inseparable friends who love each other more than even their own lives.

Thus, there are numerous examples in this single work which show what position women were holding in the minds

1. न खलु राज्यं परिपालयितुं शक्यते वीरहीनाभिरबलाभिः । P. Ch. I. p. 6.

2. राजा—कस्तादृशः सुहृद् यो मामुद्धरेद् ? सुहृदेका प्राणप्रिया, सा च स्वभावादबला भीरुश्च । विशेषतश्च चिन्ताशबला । P. Ch. III. p. 2.

3. प्राणम्योऽपि प्रियतमाद् दारयन्ति सुहृज्जनात् ।

यतस्ततो दारयन्ति दारशब्दमिह स्त्रियः ॥७॥

P. Ch. III. p. 7.

of men during this period. Nobody seems to hesitate in throwing stones at women at the first available opportunity, and the society does not seem to resent it either. Whether people in general appreciated it or not is beside the point altogether; here it is enough to note that such statements were allowed to go unchallenged and the same trends of thought continued, as can be seen from the various other plays belonging to the same category.

The *Prabodhacandrodayam*, as has already been stated, is the best among all the allegorical plays written uptill now. And, perhaps, this is the one play, wherein one does not find many disparaging statements about women. There are quite a number of women characters presented. Of course, all of them are the personifications of various abstract qualities and naturally show the characteristics akin to those qualities. It is, therefore, futile to search for human nature and behaviour in these characters. Enough to say, they are generally sweet-tempered, timid, bashful and soft, as women are expected to be. Since they are all brought on the stage with a special purpose—that of propagating a particular system of philosophy or a particular cult of devotion—it is more or less possible for us to know and understand the very peculiar attitudes and characteristics, each of them represents. There is nothing very spontaneous or natural in any of these characters to call for a special study of women in Sanskrit drama. Every one of them is a link in the patterned chain.

The same is true with the various female characters of the *Sankalpavyodaya*, the *Bhāvanāpuruṣottama* or any other play, named at the beginning of this section. But the deprecating statements about, and the despising attitude towards women are more clearly expressed in certain plays. For example, in the *Amṛtodaya* it is said : "My boy, there is nothing more despicable than woman in this world."¹

1. श्रद्धा—वत्स ! न तथा किमपीतरद्वस्तुगर्भगोचरो यथा स्त्रियो नाम ।

And the answer to this only confirms it.¹

Considering these point-blank abuses showered upon women off and on, it may not be out of place here to tarry a little and ponder over the reason why. It is a well-known fact that women always held a position of respect among the Indians. The Vedas, the Upaniṣads and Purāṇas—all bear testimony to this. Wherever a brother and a sister or wife and husband are presented together, the superiority of the sister and wife in character and conduct is made quite obvious. Maināka and Pārvatī, Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Draupadī, Kāṁsa and Devakī, Sītā and Rāma, Damayantī and Nala, Śilavatī and Ugratapaḥ, Sāvitrī and Satyavān etc.—all have the same story to tell, i. e., the women held sway as far as character and conduct, love and sacrifice were concerned. They were always the objects of reverence in India, among the Indian people. Mother was, and is, always the supreme being for every one. Then, what brought about this degeneration later? One reason suggests itself. It is the very nature of woman that makes for her strength as well as weakness. She is attractive. She lives a settled life. She is the mother by nature. She is the centre of the family. She creates the desire in man to have a family and settled life. That desire leads on to all the trials and tribulations in life. A family life, which is the nucleus of society-life, is the root of the cycle of the universe—the cycle of births and deaths. If there is no woman, there can be no family, no desires, no business, no ties, no botherations. This idea has been put forward by Rāma to Vasiṣṭha in the Yogavāsiṣṭha

1. निर्वेदः — शान्तम् । अविषयो विदुषामभिलाषस्य मानुषगणः । विशेषतस्तु—

अशुचिवपुषामेषां मध्येऽप्यमेध्यतमाः स्त्रियः

क्वचिदपि न हि श्रौते कर्मण्यमूरधिकुर्वते ।

विगलदसृजः पूयग्रंथिप्ररूढदुर्दरे

द्विपदकुमयो नित्यं यासां गलव्यघरन्नणः ॥

when he expresses his desire to renounce the worldly life.¹

Whenever women are denounced, it is significant to note the epithets used are the "tempting devils", "doors to hell", "objects of pleasure" and similar others. When we think over these epithets given to women and also remember that it is the men who give these epithets, it seems rather funny. The reason is simple. It is always easy to blame everybody else except one's own self, for one's own failures. If man cannot resist temptation, if he cannot subdue the sexual desire, if he cannot practise strict self-control, how much more easy it is to blame the woman, who is blessed by God with beauty and is made more attractive by her being more soft and less hardy and is also yielding and accommodating by nature. This can easily be the main reason for woman getting her bad name, and gaining it more and more, as man got his ascendancy through the force of varied and strong circumstances. However that may be, the fact remains that by the time the plays, we are examining, were written, women had reached that point in the scale from where no more downfall was possible. The plays, we are about to examine, also show the same deterioration in the position of women in general.

The *Caitanyacandrodaya* by Kavi Karnapūra is a play that can be classified as something between an allegorical play and a drama. It describes some incidents in the life-story of Śrī Caitanya, the great saint, who is considered as an incarnation of Viṣṇu by his followers. There are numerous female characters in this play. Real human characters, such as the mother of Śrī Caitanya and his wife, Viṣṇupriyā; personified abstract qualities, such as, Viṣṇubhaktī, Śivabhaktī, Premabhaktī, Maitrī, the characters such as Rādhā, her mother-in-law—Jaratī and others : all are depicted as rep-

1. यस्य स्त्री तस्य भोगेच्छा निःस्त्रीकस्य वव भोगभूः ।

स्त्रियं त्यक्त्वा जगत्त्यक्तं जगत्त्यक्त्वा सुखी भवेत् ॥

roduced in the *Vṛndāvanalīlā*. But the whole play being charged with the one object of promoting Kṛṣṇabhakti, there is not much scope for a critical study of the same, as a literary product or an artistic piece. All the characters are created with the sole aim of eulogising the life and teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇacaitanya. So they are more artificial than natural in their speech and behaviour. The same is true about the female characters also. Sacīdevī, the mother of the saint, is brought on the stage twice, only to bear witness to the greatness and godliness of her son, Gaurāṅga, who had left her, as also all other relations, behind, when he took to asceticism. Reading the play throughout, it can be safely deduced that the women characters portrayed in it give no information about the condition of women in general.

We find quite a number of plays belonging to the different smaller types of *Rūpakas*, such as, the *Sattaka*, *Prahasana*, *Samavakāra*, *Vyāyoga*, *Bhāṇa* etc. We come across even still smaller types belonging to the group, called *Uparūpakas*. And, if we take up a critical study of the characters in them, that by itself would form a vast subject. But most of them do not fall within the scope of our present study, because of the absence of female characters in them. We shall take up only a few, representative of these types, showing some peculiarities either in the plot or character-development or in the depiction of the characters.

Of the ten *Rūpakas* enumerated in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, none, apart from the *Nāṭaka* and the *Prakarana* found much favour with the earlier poets, except *Bhāsa*. That, atleast, is the conclusion we arrive at, because till the 12th or the 13th century, we do not come across any other type. But in the later centuries numerous shorter plays falling within the categories of *Rūpakas* and *Uparūpakas* are found. Of these, the type called *Bhāṇa* seems to be most common, perhaps due to its very nature. It is more or less a mono-acting play, though all sorts of common and funny characters

contribute towards the development of the plot. Since it is particularly jocular in nature and treats mostly of sensual pleasures without any characters except a Viṭa or Viḍuṣaka or some-one like that, presented on the stage, the like of it do not fall within the scope of our study.

The *Dhananjayavijaya*, the *Saugandhikāharāṇa* and the *Subhadrāharāṇa* are three small one-act plays, based on the various incidents described in the *Mahābhārata*.

Of these, the *Dhananjayavijaya* by Kāncanācārya treats of the victory of Arjuna over the Kauravas at Virāṭa-nagarī and has no female character in it. The *Saugandhikāharāṇa* by Viśvanātha Kavi brings Draupadī on the stage along with Yudhiṣṭhira for a few seconds towards the end of the play. She is there as the queen and beloved wife of Bhīmasena, who is ready to take any risks for her. Nothing much is there to show any trait of her character, one way or the other.

The *Subhadrāharāṇa* is called by the author, Mādhava-bhaṭṭa, himself as *Śrīgaditam*, a type belonging to that of the *Uparūpakas*. The main characteristics of this type are that, it should have a famous plot with a famous hero; it should have only three *Sandhis*, leaving out the *Garbha* and *Vimarṣa*; *Bhārati Vṛtti* should be predominant; there should be the *Śrī* added; and it should have only one act.¹

The play dramatises the marriage of Subhadrā and Arjuna, as described in the *Mahābhārata*. Subhadrā falls in love with Arjuna on hearing about his heroic deeds and in turn is loved by Arjuna. During his wanderings in disguise as an ascetic, Arjuna reaches Dwārakā and carries away Subhadrā with the connivance and indirect help of Śrī

1. प्रख्यातवृत्तमेकाङ्कं प्रख्यातोदात्तनायकम् ।

प्रसिद्धनायिकं गर्भविमर्शभ्यां विवर्जितम् ॥

भारतीवृत्तिबहुलं श्रीतिशब्देन संकुलम् ।

मतं श्रीगदितो नाम विद्वद्भिन्नरूपकम् ॥

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Kṛṣṇa himself, who finally pacifies all concerned by saying that the *Rākṣasī* type of marriage is the best for the Kṣatriyas and that Arjuna is the best husband Subhadrā can get. The story moves on smoothly and naturally from action to action. Subhadrā, Sumatikā and Revatī are the only women characters depicted.

All of them are attractive, dignified and showing the characteristics natural to girls of noble and aristocratic families. They are simple and innocent, and at the same time adorable. Subhadrā reminds us of Śakuntalā in the third act of the 'Abhijñānaśākuntala'. She is bold enough to join in the plot of her own abduction, and is skilful to avoid others knowing her real feelings. Revatī, the wife of Bala-bhadra, speaks, moves and behaves in a way befitting a queen and the elder sister-in-law that she is. She is loving, thoughtful, kind and understanding towards her husband's sister and also towards the servants and other dependents.

There are two plays based on the story of Rāma and Sitā with the same name, though the themes are different. The *Unmattarāghava* by Virūpākṣadeva is a one-act play, belonging to the type of *Prekṣanaka*,¹ described by dramaturgists as one of the *Uparūpakas*. It deals with the incidents in the Rāmāyaṇa from the appearance of the Golden Deer to the killing of Rāvaṇa and the return of Sitā. But there is a remarkable change made in the plot. While Rāma

1. अ. प्रेक्षणकलक्षणं चेत्यमुपवर्णितम् । यथा शृङ्गारप्रकाशे—

रथ्यासमाजचत्वरसुरालयादौ प्रवर्त्यते बहुभिः ।

पात्रविशेषैर्यत्तत् प्रेक्षणकं कामदहनादि ॥

Un. Rā. Introduction, p. 7

आ. गर्भविमर्शरहितं प्रेक्षणं हीननायकम् ।

असूत्रधारमेकाङ्कमविष्कम्भप्रवेशकम् ॥

नियुद्धसम्फोटयुतं सर्ववृत्तिसमाश्रितम् ।

नेपथ्ये गीयते नान्दी तथा तत्र प्ररोचना ॥

is in the condition of madness due to the separation of Sītā, who was carried away by Rāvaṇa in the absence of both the brothers, Lakṣmaṇa goes in search of Sītā. It is he alone who goes to Lankā working on the suggestion of Jaṭāyu and achieves the recovery of Sītā, killing Bālī, gaining friendship of Sugrīva and finally killing Rāvaṇa also with the help of Vibhīṣaṇa. Nowhere else we find this version of the story in which Rāma is so mad with sorrow that he becomes inactive, while Lakṣmaṇa achieves everything single-handed.

Sītā is the only female character depicted in this play. It is very refreshing to note that the picture of Sītā, here, is soft, sweet and adorable. No bad words or unbecoming behaviour is attributed to her. Even where she asks Lakṣmaṇa to go to the help of his brother, she is pictured true to her noble character, unlike the 'Āścaryacūdāmaṇī', or even the Rāmāyaṇa itself. The very little that we see of this noble queen is the best that one can expect from a really noble lady.

The other play with the same name—the *Unmattarāghava*—is also a *Prekṣaṇaka*, written by Bhāskarkavi, who is said to have lived in the 14th century. The story depicted here is unique, completely evolved from the imagination of the poet. Sītā and her friend, Madhukarikā, are the only female characters. While Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are out to hunt the Golden Deer, Sītā is picking flowers in the forest with her friend. By mistake she enters the forsaken hermitage of Sage Durvāsā, which was overladen with a curse from him. Due to the curse, Sītā is turned into a deer and when the brothers return, they find only Madhukarikā with the news that Sītā is mysteriously missing. Rāma becomes mad due to the pangs of separation from his beloved wife and Lakṣmaṇa is out of his wits trying to console him. In the meantime, Sage Agastya happens to see the deer wandering about in the hermitage, realises who she is and turns her back to her own form by his yogic powers and brings her to Rāma. Both the women depicted here are simple, innocent

and straightforward girls, belonging to the peaceful atmosphere of the hermitage. They are very much different from the ones we have hitherto witnessed during this period. This is indeed refreshing.

The *Lilāvati* is a one-act play, belonging to the type called *Vithi*. The author is Rāmapāṇivāda, who wrote somewhere in the sixteenth century and was a great scholar belonging to Kerala. He has written another one-act play of the same type called, *Candrikā*. *Vithi* is described by Dhananjaya as a play similar to *Bhāna*, but with two characters present on the stage, with only two *Sandhis* and full of *Ākāśabhāṣitas*.¹

The story treats with the love affair of *Lilāvati*, the Princess of Karnaṭa and King *Virapāla* of Kuntala. The only female characters referred to and heard from within are the Princess herself, *Kalāvati*, the chief queen of *Virapāla*, the ascetic woman, *Siddhimati* and *Kelimālā*, the maid-in-attendance of *Kalāvati*. As *Vithi* allows only two characters on the stage, the hero and his friend *Vaiḥāsika* alone are seen, while all the female characters are only heard through the words from the sky—*Ākāśabhāṣita*. This is a court comedy, invented and developed on the same pattern as the earlier *Naṭikas*. *Vaiḥāsika*, the court-jester, is the chief promoter of the action here and reminds us of *Maitreya*, the friend of *Agnimitra*, in the 'Mālavikāgnimitra' of *Kālidāsa*.

Lilāvati is a timid maiden dependent on the queen and has neither the energy nor the will-power to do anything for herself. *Kalāvati* is a jealous wife, but not jealous enough to forget her duty towards her husband. She seems to be

1. अ. वीथी तु कैशिकीवृत्तौ सच्यङ्गाङ्गैस्तु भागवत् ।
रसः सूच्यस्तु शृङ्गारः स्पृशेदपि रसान्तरम् ॥

आ. वीथ्यामेको भवेदङ्कः कश्चिदेकोत्र कल्प्यते ।

आकाशभाषितैरुक्तैश्चित्रां प्रत्युक्तिमाश्रिताः ॥

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easily trusting and forgiving. The magic of Siddhimatī and the deception practised by Vaihāsika claim her as an easy victim. She is a straight-forward and ordinary woman, who is always solicitous of the welfare of her husband. Siddhimatī, who helped the couple to unite, is a combination of Kāmandakī in the 'Mālatīmādhava' and Vinayandharā of the 'Kaumudīmahotsava'. The only remarkable difference is that this ascetic woman has no special interest in either of the couple, but she uses her powers to help them, just because she was approached for help by Vaihāsika. It is these magic powers that make the desired end possible. Though none of these women are presented on the stage, the working of their minds is easily understandable. All of them are the ordinary types of women with their natural likes and dislikes, love, jealousy, hatred and anger.

But the play, *Madanaketuviṇaya* by the same author strikes quite a different note as far as the women characters are concerned. It is a full-fledged play with five acts, treating of the incidents in the court of Madanaketu, the king of Siṃhala. The heroine is Anangalekhā, a courtesan, who is deeply in love with the king, and with whom the king also is infatuated. The plot deals with the love of the king for the courtesan, which makes him forgetful of the kingly duties and the girl, herself realising the fact, helps the well-wishers of the king in saving him from himself. Anangalekhā purposely behaves in such a way as to excite disgust in her lover towards herself, as also towards ordinary worldly pleasures. Finally, the king is rid of his infatuation and he accepts the path of duty and *Vairāgya*.

In this play, the author has shown how a woman can rise to that height of self-sacrifice in which everything except the welfare of the beloved is forgotten. Among the many dramas we have scrutinised uptill now, this stands out as an ideal in the characterisation of women. Though the physical love and sensual pleasures are held up to ridicule in almost

every word and action of the various characters, careful delineation of Anangalekhā vindicates the honour and prestige of woman as such. In her, we have an ideal of a real woman with love, self-sacrifice and singleness of purpose combined, though she is a born courtesan. After Vasanta-senā, presented by Śudraka, it is here that we find another woman of the same calibre, but commanding more admiration and honour by the self-sacrificing devotion she actually shows for the welfare of her lover.

Prahasanas are the type of plays which give free hand to the dramatists to openly indulge in the description of sensual pleasures and to depict women in their worst possible aspect. There are quite a number of these among the plays available in Sanskrit literature, published or unpublished. The earliest of these available to us is the *Mattavilāsa Prahasana* by Mahendra. The drunken revelry of a Kāpālika with his beloved, Devasomā, a courtesan, his quarrels with the Śākyabhikṣu due to the misunderstanding that the latter had taken away his *Kapāla*, which was actually taken away by a dog, and finally the recovery of the *Kapāla* from a mad man, are the incidents described. The date of this author is accepted by scholars as the 7th century A. D. The only woman depicted is Devasomā, and the natural characteristics of such a woman are well-portrayed.

Many other *Prahasanas* followed, the *Hāsyārṇava Prahasana*, perhaps, crowning them all by the most vulgar depiction of the behaviour of courtesans. Since the very nature of the type demands the depiction of the worst side of human character and since all of them conform more or less to the same pattern, there is hardly a necessity of taking up the individual female characters depicted in this type of plays, which are not inconsiderable in number.

There is another type of plays which should attract our attention, because of the possibility of numerous female characters in it. It is the *Sattaka*, really a *Nāṭika* written

in Prākṛt, as described by the later dramaturgists. This type is not described in the Nāṭyaśāstra, but Abhinavagupta, Sārādātanaya and Sāgaranandin mention and describe it and compare it with the *Nāṭika*. We have already studied the *Karpūramañjarī* by Rājasekhara in a previous chapter. The *Candralekḥā* by Rudradāsa is another *Saṭṭaka*, which was written in the middle of the 17th century. The main female characters presented are—the queen of Mānaveda; Candralekḥā, the heroine; the presiding deity of the Cintāmaṇi and a few maids-in-attendance. The main theme is the love of the hero, Mānaveda, for a beautiful girl brought to his vision by the power of the Cintāmaṇi, and the final union of the couple with the permission of the queen. There are many similarities between the *Karpūramañjarī* and the play under study. But this may be true of all the *Saṭṭakas* because of the patternization of the theme and characterisation. If there is anything worth noticing as a difference, it is this, that, the amorous sentiment is characterised by a subdued spirit and is presented with moderation.

The *Ānandasundarī* by Ghanaśyāma is another *Saṭṭaka* written during the latter part of the 18th century. The king Śikhaṇḍacandra falls in love with Ānandasundarī, the daughter of king Caṇḍavega and after the usual obstacles they are married to each other with the consent of the chief queen, and also a son is born to them. While all such plays generally end with the happy union of the hero and the heroine, here, the birth of the son seems to be the final aim. The king's desire to marry the daughter of Caṇḍavega seems to have more justification, because it is not the infatuation of the king for the girl that is shown as the main reason for the marriage, but the desire to have a son to continue the dynasty. The father of the girl himself sends the princess in the guise of a boy with the name, Pingalaka, to the court of Śikhaṇḍacandra, so that she may win the affection of the king and, at the same time, avoid raising any suspicion

in the mind of the chief queen. A play within the play is introduced to show how this is achieved. Then, as usual, the king and the princess are introduced to each other; the chief queen gets scent of the matter and tries to interfere, but is finally pacified by the pleadings of the king; gives the girl in marriage to him. Even after this end is achieved, the newly wed princess is not sure of the king's constancy and the king has to assure her again and again. A son is born to her. And, at the same time, the minister, Dindiraka, who was sent to subdue Vibadaka of Sindhudurga, also returns victorious. Here comes another play, the *Garbha Nāṭaka*, showing the incidents that lead to the victory of Dindiraka, at the end of which the chief queen enters with Ānandasundarī and her son to congratulate the king, with which the play comes to a happy end.

Ānandasundarī, her friend Caturikā, her nurse Bhānumatī, the queen and her maid-in-attendance, Hemavatī, are the female characters presented. The main theme, as we have seen, is on the same pattern as the many court comedies we have already studied. It is only the love-story of King Śikhaṇḍacandra and Princess Ānandasundarī. Still, we cannot help noticing the many differences that exist in the action and also the denouement. As a court comedy, with the most funny character in the form of Viduṣaka, it is only natural that there is abundance of humorous incidents and enough opportunities for open laughter. The interest in the play is sustained to a very great extent by light humour, constituted by pun on words, prickly remarks, foolish words and actions of the various light characters, caricatures of holy things, exaggeration and shy jokes. These are all, perhaps, as they should be, because of the very nature of the theme and the type of the play; for, after all, a *Saṭṭaka* is really a *Nāṭikā* written all in Prākṛt.

But, when we come to the women characters, we find a little difference in the traits and characteristics noticeable here. Ever since the time of the earlier *Nāṭikās*, drawn on

the pattern of the story in the 'Mālavikāgnimitra' Nāṭaka of Kalidāsa, we have always found the heroine to be a weeping, wailing, frail creature, who has no strength of her own and who is always looking to others to get all that she wants to be achieved. Of course, we have some plays like the Vid-dhasālabhanjikā, Pārijātamanjarī, Ratnapāñcālikā etc., where the heroines are in disguise as boys or turned into statues of some kind to escape the eyes of the chief queen. But here, the whole situation is presented in a different way. The first and foremost thing is the fact that something more reasonable and tangible, than the mere infatuation for each other, is given as the reason for the second marriage of the king. The father of Princess Anandasundarī himself sends her in disguise so that she may find favour in the eyes of her future husband and the reason of this desire is the necessity of having a son, to continue the dynasty.

Anandasundarī is well-versed in fine arts and shows refinement, as natural to the girls of the royal families. Though she is disguised as a boy, her natural bashfulness and timidity are obvious. There is nothing very special or particular to be noticed in this character. The queen is loving and obedient to her husband. Though she is jealous of the possible new rivals, the moment she realises the possibility of a son being born to the king by a second marriage, she is only too willing to pocket her pride and allow her husband to have his own way. And having once accepted the girl as a co-wife, she treats her with real affection. The way she brings in the baby born to her co-wife and congratulates the king, is very touching. All together, the depiction of the main female characters is well worth noticing, for the good qualities of women are not missed by this poet. Though much light talk is going on among all the characters, the respect and consideration, due to women, seem to have been kept in view all the time. Even the foolish jokes of the Viduṣaka seem to have a restraint in the presence of the ladies. The

maids-in-attendance and the friends of the heroine and the queen, all maintain full decorum and decency. To sum up, the portrayal of women in this play shows a change for the better.

Thus, we have almost come to the end of our study of women characters, as depicted in the Sanskrit plays, written upto the end of the 18th century. This last period has been rather a Slough of Despond, slowly growing deeper and deeper ever since Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti wrote. But, at the same time, we have to remember certain facts connected with the real condition of women in society during this period. Turning over the pages of the Indian history of this period, i. e., from the 10th to the 19th centuries, we do not always meet with women who are subdued and held down in the scale of society. On the other hand, the strong, courageous Rajput women, led by Padminī, Saṁyogitā, Durgāvatī and others; the brave, wise and resourceful Mahārāṣṭra women led by Lakṣmibāī of Jhānsī and Ahilyābāī of Indore; the undaunted women of Malabar in the South, led by Umayammā Rānī and Sītālakṣmī, Cānda Bibī and Raziā Begama and scores of others stand up in an array and seem to challenge the correctness of our conclusion that the position of women during this period was low and pitiable. The question naturally arises, how to account for this contrast between the society and the literature? Drama is supposed to be an imitation of the world. It has been accepted as such by all. Then why this discrepancy? What is the reason of showing women as weeping, feeble creatures who are only able to enjoy life within the four-walls of the house or the harem? These are the questions which would bear a little investigation by scholars of Sociology, who can probe deep with interest and careful observation.

There cannot be any doubt as to the heroic nature, efficiency and capacity of the celebrated Indian women about whom we have always heard. It is the training given by

mothers that has always created the greatest of our people—scientists, philosophers, politicians, social reformers, heroes and patriots. But looking at the Sanskrit stage, we cannot say with equal correctness that we find the imitation of the contemporary society in any true and correct form. It has to be admitted that the Sanskrit plays of these later centuries never rose to that height of real dramas. They are more important as literary pieces than artistic representations on the stage. We cannot but agree with those who say that the writers of these centuries were more anxious to please the kings and nobles who patronised them and they were more interested in the exhibition of literary merits and scholarliness than anything practical. This attitude of the writers and the patrons together must have caused the patternisation of themes which are peculiar to this period.

Another point which, perhaps, may be relevant to remember here is that, though special courage, bravery, self-respect and concern about their own purity and honour characterised the womenfolk belonging to the different parts of India, the names thus eulogised are from the Royal families. The general tone common to the ordinary women belonging to the whole of *Āryāvarta* was rather one of despondency and dejection. The general conditions were all against the freedom of the so-called weaker sex, and education in the real sense was being denied to them. The political and social conditions were such as made women shrink back more and more into the four-walls of the home and the least said about them came to be considered the best for them. There is recorded history to tell us now what was happening in the growth of humanity and social life during this period.

Though Sanskrit plays continued to be written, there was not much life in the characters. The traditions had so much hold on the writers that they dared not bring any idea of their own to the forefront. Injunctions increased on the laws and regulations coming from the social law-givers and

demanding, though indirectly, a complete patternisation of the conduct of all sections of people. Freedom of life and behaviour gradually disappeared. Though it was only natural that there were violations when the bondage of rules grew tight to extremes, the poet could hardly utilise such incidents for the development of his art, because that would shock the sense of decorum and religious taste of the people. Social customs became more and more puritanic, and the current of social life became more and more stagnant. As a result of this stagnation in social life, the plots of the later writers became artificial. These tendencies are noticeable even after Bhavabhūti and by the time of Jayadeva, the flow seems to have come to a complete standstill. And it took centuries of suffering and despair to shake the society out of the slumber and lethargy which had engulfed it.

It required another *Kurukṣetra* to redeem the society which was trying to feel its course through a chaotic conflict of different types of ideas and customs, of different cultures and ideals which were trying to drown the individuality of man engrossed in the fierce struggle for existence in a world, where all were running in frantic haste to a destination which nobody knew. This requirement was fulfilled by the advent of the various religious, social and political reformers in the 19th century. Along with the beginning of this renaissance, the one important factor that was kept down by the innumerable laws of the Śāstras, namely, the position of women, began to attract the broad-minded and more prudent thinkers. These thinkers realised that one of the main causes of the stagnation of the society was the pitiable and disgraceful condition in which one-half of humanity was plunged. The double-wheeled carriage of society with men and women as its two wheels was being dragged back and forth simultaneously—one wheel strong and oiled and on smooth ground, able to run at full speed; the other unkempt, unoiled and heavy with mud, stuck in the gutter, unable to

move. Though this conflict between the two had begun centuries ago and the carriage had come to a stand-still, the realisation of the fact and attempts to rectify the wrong done in the past, came quite late and very slowly. But once it came, things began to move, and move fast. Political, religious and social reforms came crowding one after another; sudden and drastic changes overtook the society and men and women changed beyond recognition. Literature, the mirror of society reflected these changes. Modern literature is a proof of this new life and the forward movement of the Indian society as a whole. It is only natural that dramatic literature should reflect this renaissance in a pronounced way.

CHAPTER VII

WOMEN IN THE MODERN SANSKRIT PLAYS

The eighteenth century was showing a different trend in the thoughts of people in general. Times were slowly changing and consequently literature also. The revival of Sanskrit plays has been seen by us in the previous chapter. Many old themes had begun to be treated in a new way. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries show that the change continued with greater vigour. A good number of plays came to be written in Sanskrit during this period.

Along with the advent of the freedom movement in India, the value of women as helpers inside and outside the house came to be realised more and more. They, by their own efforts and with the help of the broad-minded and thinking people of the generation, began to come forward in the social and political arena. The difficult and pitiable state into which the women had fallen, and also the brave and laudable efforts they themselves were making to come forward in order to help the progress of the nation, were perforce brought to the fore-front. This caused a revision of attitude towards women among the general public. It was only natural that these truths find reflection in the literature of this period. Along with the strong wave of patriotism that came over the whole country, the love of Sanskrit language and literature and the desire to explore its possibilities thoroughly, also increased. The scholars who specialised in the language and literature felt it their duty to take up the cause of the ancient language and enrich it in a proper way. Many poems and plays began to be written in this era. Though a

number of them have not yet seen the light of the day, there are a good number which were published and also acted on various occasions. Śrī Hariharopādhyāya, Śrī Mathurāprasāda Dīkṣita, Śrī Kālīpāda Tarkācārya, Śrī Ambikā-datta Vyāsa, Śrī Tādpatrikara, Śrī Haridāsa Siddhāntavāgīśa, Śrī Kapiladeva Dvivedī and such others have made commendable attempts in this direction. The plays written during this period seem to have more life in them. The writers have out-grown the tendency to follow slavishly the rules and regulations laid down centuries before. The modern writers follow the natural development of human character, emotions and feelings. Though the necessary poetic imagination has its full play in the modern plays, the natural course of development is not sacrificed for the sake of keeping within the rigid rules and regulations.

According to the central themes, the modern Sanskrit plays fall into three main categories : those based on mythology, those based on historical incidents, and those that have social and imaginary themes. The modern tendency is to present real portraits before the audience and to represent on the stage, the happenings of the world correctly. Women have found their right place in these dramas to a great extent. They are no more neglected or treated as possessions of men meant only for enjoyment. A close examination of some of these plays may enable us to see the real conception of women during this period.

Taking up the plays with mythological themes, *The Sāmavātam*, a play in six acts attracts our attention first. It deals with the story of the Brāhmin boy Sāmavān, who became changed to a woman by the power of meditation practised by the queen Sīmantinī, a great devotee of Goddess Pārvatī and Bhagavān Śaṅkara. This story is found in the Skandapurāṇa and Śivapurāṇa as an example of the power of faith and devotion. The author, in his introduction says, "In the 'Somavratā prakaraṇa' of the Skandapurāṇa, there is a story describing how Sāmavān was turned into a woman,

because he was accepted as the wife of the brāhmin by Queen Sīmantiṇī and was worshipped by her as such.¹

But, many changes, in fact very drastic changes, have been effected by the author in this play. His intention is obviously to impart instruction along with enjoyment. He says in the introduction, "Though there is the erotic sentiment depicted in this play, the heroine does not belong to the *Parakīyā* or *Sāmānya* type; nor the *Gāndharva* type of marriage has been shown here for, young people are easily attracted towards sexual pleasures, and by witnessing such affairs on the stage, there is a possibility of their becoming desirous to indulge in them and of even crossing the limits of morality and good conduct. Hence, care has been taken not to present such incidents that would create or encourage any undesirable emotions."²

The story in the Purāṇa is as follows. Two brāhmin boys, Sumedha and Sāmavān, after completing their education, were in search of some means to earn their livelihood, and thus remove the poverty of their parents. Incidentally, they heard that, Queen Sīmantiṇī of Niṣadha was worshipping Brāhmin couples every Monday evenings and then

1. स्कन्दपुराणीयब्रह्मोत्तरखण्डे सोमव्रतप्रकुरो 'सीमन्तिन्या पार्वतीधिया पूजितः पुरुषोऽपि सामवांस्तद्भक्तिमहिम्ना स्त्रीत्वं लेभे' । इति संक्षिप्ताऽस्त्याख्यायिका ।

Sa. Introduction. p. 8

2. यद्यप्यत्राङ्गी शृङ्गारो रसः, तथापि नैष परकीयां सामान्यनायिकां वा समवलम्ब्य प्रवृत्तो न वा गान्धर्वादिवाहाश्रयः, न नायक धैर्योदार्यादिमर्यादाविघातृकमदनमदवशंवदताविलः, न च वा तादृशत्वेऽपि विच्छिन्नविच्छित्तिरस्ति । —सम्प्रति हि स्वभावत एव विषयलोलुपचेतसो भवन्ति नवयुवकाः । ते च यथा काव्येषु परकीयाविषयकप्रेमपूरं परिकलन्त्य न भवेयुरतिकलुषमनसो न वा विधयेयुर्धैर्यमर्यादाम्, तथा विशिष्यास्मिन् सच्चरितानुष्ठानमेवाशंस्यत इति स्वयमेव विभाषयिष्यन्ति भावुकाः ।

Sa. Introduction. p. 9

giving them untold wealth at the conclusion of her Monday fasts. They decided to take advantage of the situation by going to the queen in disguise as husband and wife, making Sāmavān disguise as the wife. The queen never doubting the integrity of the couple, worshipped them as man and wife, seeing them as Śiva and Pārvati, and gave them much more than what they could ever dream of. But, when they came out of the palace, to their utter dismay, they realised that there was no Sāmavān any more because the disguise had only become too effective¹.

This story is retold by Śrī Ambikādatta Vyāsa in his play with many changes. The boys are completely absolved of all blame in cheating the queen. Instead, the curse of Durvāsā and the mischievous plan of King Dharmasindhu to play a practical joke on his sister-in-law are introduced to account for the incidents. The main female characters are Queen Simantini and Sāmavati, the female guise of Sāmavān, both of whom we see in the epics. The nymphs, Madālasā and Induvadana, the dancing-girl Bhāvakalāvati, the maid-servants in the king's harem named Mālatikā and Madhuravacanā, are all the poet's own inventions.

In the first act, we are introduced to the two boys, Sumedha and Sāmavān, who are being sent to King Dharmasindhu of Vidarbha in order to acquire enough money for their marriage. The two nymphs are introduced here by the author as enjoying a joy-ride in the terrestrial world. Sāmavān, attracted by the sweet music and the super-human beauty of these girls, forgets himself and his surroundings so much that he falls a victim to the curse of the angry sage Durvāsā, like Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā, though with lesser justification. The curse went thus—"Since you were so engrossed in admiring women, as to disregard me, you become a woman yourself."²

1. Skandapurāṇa. Somavrata Prakarṇam.

2. दुर्वासाः — स्त्रियं विलोकयन् यत् त्वं मामवज्ञातवानसि ।

स्त्रीरूपमचिरादेव तस्मात् त्वं कलियष्यसि ॥ Sā. I. 64

These two women do not have any other purpose to serve in this play except to create a cause for Durvāsā's curse, which becomes the ultimate cause of Sāmavān's change of sex. Bhāvakalāvati is the dancing girl, who is introduced in the court of King Dharmasindhu only to add to the revelry already existing there. Her presence there, goes to prove the condition of the royal assemblies where luxury and amour were the ruling elements. Certain remarks of the wise *Amātya* of the king, make it clear that though the king's amorous nature allows the presence of the courtesans, such women were not at all accepted as good company by any respectable man. All assembled were enjoying the dance and the music along with the king. But the *Amātya* is unhappy about the low atmosphere there and thinks to himself, "When the dance is going on in the amorous assembly, the *Mr̥danga* tells on their face 'fie ! fie unto them !'; repeatedly, and the *tālā* asks 'whom ? whom ?' the answer to which is given by the jingling ornaments and the actions of the dancer herself pointing by the bent brows 'these people here.'"¹

The feeling of the *Amātya* is confined to himself only, because, even he does not dare to speak out against the wishes of the king, who seems to be submerged in sensual pleasures and surrounded by a court where sensual enjoyment and amorous jokes were ruling. This scene and specially Bhāvakalāvati, go a long way to prove to the people, how disgusting and dangerous such a life is. It also helps us to understand the atmosphere. Having watched this scene, and observed the words and deeds of the king's favourite, Vasantaka, one is not very much surprised at the indulgence of

1. अमात्यः — (स्वगतम्) अहं तु तर्कयामि यत्—

आरब्धे नृत्यकृत्ये हरिगुणरहिते लम्पटानां समाजे,

धिक् तान् धिक् तान् मृदङ्गः कथयति सुतरां सम्मुखं श्रावयित्वा ।

कान् कान् कान् कांश्च तालः प्रतिरणतितरामङ्गहारैश्चबाला

सभ्रूभङ्गरपाङ्गः प्रवदति सकलं नूनमेतान् समेतान् ॥ Śā. II. 31

the king in submitting himself so complacently to the wicked plans of that unscrupulous fellow.

The leading female character in this play is Sāmavati, the female guise of the boy Sāmavān. Enough indications are there in the very beginning of the play, as to the coming calamity. Still, the change that has come over the simple and good boy after his metamorphosis, is rather surprising, to say the least. He seems to have completely forgotten all his learning, experience and wisdom, he possessed before this change. After the miraculous incident, there is no existence of Sāmavān, the boy. There is only a very unrefined love-stricken girl. By presenting her this way, perhaps, the author is expressing his own views about women, that they care for nothing else in this world except sensual pleasures. After observing the unbelievable change in Sāmavān, in form as well as character, we feel that the Brāhmin Sāraswata is well justified in his wailing—"I had only one son to continue my family and by the company of this so-called king, even he has been turned into a woman who possesses no *ācāra*.¹

The injunction of Manu, that women have no right to perform any religious rites and her God should be her husband seem to have a firm hold on the author. Śrī Ambikā-datta Vyāsa wrote in the 19th century and it was a time of confusion as far as Indian women were concerned. Though women had reached the lowest step in degradation, there was a very remote light seen at a distance even as the advent of dawn. Though the women's cause was being taken up by great minds and some women themselves were trying to clutch on to the least support to raise themselves up, still, the majority were in the darkest and deepest slough of despond. Almost every reference to woman is pregnant with contempt and distrust. In the picture of Sāmavati, as port-

1. सारस्वतः—(सक्रोधशोकम्) आ ! एक एव तु मम कुलाधारः पुत्रः,
सोप्येतस्य कौतुकिनो राजबन्धोः संसर्गादाचारशून्यं
स्त्रीत्वमाप्तः ।

rayed in this play is taken as a typical example of womanhood, one can only bow one's head in shame at the shamelessness, wickedness, and irrepressable amorous desires, attributed to women.

But, it is rather difficult to accept the picture of woman as drawn by this poet to be the representative one. Because this era was the time of the great and good women such as Rānī Ahalyābāi, Rānī Lakṣmībāi of Jhānsī, Rānī Durgavatī, Chānd Bibī, Raziā Begam and many others. Under these circumstances, the only conclusion that we can draw is that every one sees things and people as he or she wishes to see. In the course of the conversation, Sumedha himself feels the same thing—"Every one sees according to his own desires and feelings; from the same Guru, Kapila, both the theism and atheism came to existence."¹

Here, there is something worthy of our notice. We have heard the author's claim that no obscene or improper scenes and actions are brought on the stage because he knew of the possible adverse effects of such things on the younger minds. But the latter portion of the play, the scenes between Sāmavati and Sumedha, as a whole, is a proof to the contrary. The open requests of Sāmavati to Sumedha to save her from the attack of Cupid is unworthy of even a courtesan. These are indications enough to prove that the author does not have much regard for women in general. Every woman, introduced in this play, is rather of a low standard, as far as conduct and character are concerned. Of course, Queen Simantini is praised to the utmost; but she is a character taken from the pages of the epics, and one whose status is held sacred from ages past. And further, she never, even once, is seen on the stage.

1. सुमेधा — (स्वगतम्)

यादृशी भावना यस्य सोऽर्थं गृह्णाति तादृशम् ।

शेषं निरीशं च मतं द्विधाऽभूत् कपिलाद्यतः ॥ Sā. IV. 46

The curse of Durvāsas that Sālavān should become a woman is also a pointer towards the mentality of the author. The worst thing that can happen to any human being is to be born as a woman. We are here reminded of the wailing of Sitā in the *Kundamālā*, "Enough with this life as a woman."¹ The poet depicts two places mainly, the hermitage and the royal court. In the hermitage, there is no place for a woman, for, being a temptor, she is a person to be avoided and treated with contempt. In the court, she is the object of sensual enjoyment. The only thing that is praise-worthy in her is her physical beauty. Even Queen Sīmantiṇī, held in reverence by every one far and near, is subject to the waywardness and unscrupulous behaviour of King Dharmabandhu. The justification, he finds for his action is that he being like a brother to King Candrāṅgada, has every right to play jokes on his wife, who is the sister-in-law.² Though, thus teasing the sister-in-law is a common custom in North India, it does not behove a powerful king to stoop to this practical joke and force two simple straight-forward and helpless boys to deceive the queen, who is a real devotee of God. In forcing the boys to follow his will, he is even quoting scriptures to prove that the king's order should be always obeyed.³ While reading through this context, one is reminded of the

1. सीता—सर्वथा अलमहिलात्वेन ।

Ku. mā. I. p. 21

2. राजा—(स्वगतम्) अस्ति महाराजचन्द्राङ्गदेन सह मम भ्रातृभावः, इति तत्पत्नी तत्रभवती सीमन्तिनी मे हास्यपात्रम् । (हसन्) अस्तु, तथा सह इयमेव वसन्तक्रीडा स्यात् ।

Sa. III. p. 117

3. अ. राजा—तर्किक, नैतत् प्रसिद्धम् ? यत्,

देवताया गुरोः पित्रोस्तथा राजकुलस्य च ।

आज्ञामुल्लङ्घ्यते योजसौ सद्यो नश्यति सान्वयः ॥ Sa. III. 33

आ. राजा—नीतिवचनमेतत् स्मरणीयम्—

यदाज्ञप्तं तु भूपालैर्गुरुभिर्जनकेन वा ।

अविचार्यैव तत्कुर्यात् अन्यथा तु भयं भवेत् ॥

Sa. III. 36

saying—"the devil quoting the scripture."

The theme and its treatment are very refreshing in so far that hitherto, the plays, we came across, were mostly stereotyped love-stories with nothing elevating or ennobling in them. The pleasure-loving court and the light-hearted treatment of women are seen in this play also. Marriage seems to be still the only way of life for the women. Sāras-wata tells Sāmavati, who is feeling sad to leave the parental home to go to her husband's house, "My daughter, don't be sad! All girls stay with their parents, please them with sweet words and then go to their husbands' houses just as you do now. There is nothing new in this."¹ Education in the sense of learning and wisdom does not seem to be possible for girls. Sāmavān, the boy, was well versed in all the Vedas and the Śāstras, but the moment he became a woman, all that knowledge seems to have disappeared as if by magic. The character, behaviour, mode of talk, everything seems to have undergone a change for the worse. Sāmavān was a poetic-minded, simple, and straight-forward boy who found great pleasure in observing everything beautiful in nature, human-beings, situations etc. But, when the change came, the new creature as a woman, had nothing else but love and love alone to talk about. Sāmavati seemsto be a tempter and an unrefined soul, quite contrary to the character that was in the form of the man. This character, as presented by Vyāsa, is no credit to any society whatever, and much less so to the Indian womanhood.

The same story has served as the theme for another modern Sanskrit play called *Puruṣaramaṇīyam* written by Śrī Śrījīvanīyāyātīrtha Bhaṭṭācārya. The author himself gives the date as 1923 A. D. It is a small play in two acts,

1. सारस्वतः—पुत्रि ! अलमोन्मनस्येन, सर्वा अपि स्त्रिय एवमेव कियत्कालं
कोमलभाषणोर्मातापितरौ विमोह्य परतः पतिगेहं सनाथयन्ति,
तन्मात्र कीडपि नवीनो व्यापारः । Sā. VI. p. 220

the name being justified by the fact that a man is changed to a woman in the course of the story. This author has also taken the liberty to change the original story to suit the proper development and one cannot help feeling that the changes made here, are better designed than in the other play. The main purpose of this play appears to be just to eulogise the power of undivided devotion to Lord Śiva.

As in the original, the two Brāhmin boys are friends and class-mates, and also the only sons of their respective fathers. The names are Subandhu and Somadutta. The boys, after finishing their education, are going in search of some means to earn money, and are confronted with dacoits on the way. After this incident, Subandhu himself tries to loot people, and once, as fate would have it, they both try to loot a Brāhmin couple, who were returning from Queen Simantini and the lady advises the boys to go to Simantini and she would give them whatever they want. The plan appeals to the manly Subandhu and he persuades Somadutta to dress up like a woman. They both enter the presence of the queen, and as usual, she worships them as man and wife, in the form of Śiva and Pārvatī. They are sent off with great wealth and many valuable presents. Once they are out of the palace and are about to go their way, they both realise that the farce has turned into a grim reality and that they are facing the difficult situation of the metamorphosis, Somadatta had undergone. Then they please Lord Śiva by prayers, who appears before them and advises them to take things easy and make the best of an inevitable situation by marrying each other. Thus they take to *Grahassthāśrama* and live happily ever after.

The Brāhmin lady and Somadattā are the female characters depicted in this play, but both are good and noble with the proper actions and reactions worthy of their family and position. The first one, an old lady who accompanied her husband to receive the *puja* and offerings from Simantini

is the type we see in ordinary life. She is a good woman who desires happiness and prosperity in life. She is timid and god-fearing. It is she who advises Subandhu to go to the queen as a married Brāhmin with Somadatta as his wife. At the very sight of the thief, she faints with fright. In her, we are able to see the reflection of the ordinary Brāhmin women seen every where.

Somadattā is the boy turned into a female due to the power of Simantini's faith. Even when he was a boy, he shows traits of feminine nature in so far that he is more soft, charming and timid than his friend Subandhu. He had kept his hair long of his own accord. Because of all these prominent characteristics, it was that when the question of disguise came, they both decided upon Somadatta to take the woman's garb. These characteristics were, perhaps, the reminiscents of his previous birth, as revealed by Lord Śiva later on.¹

In the second scene, when the change was already effected, Somadatta is blissfully ignorant of it, and Subandhu had to try his very best to convince him of the fact. Even then, he is very reluctant to believe it.² There is a great difference noticeable between the reactions of Sāmavān and Somadatta under the same circumstances. One has to admit that the thoughts, words and deeds of Somadatta are more proper, suitable and natural to the persons, time and situation. Unlike Sāmavati, who had forgotten all her antecedents and was behaving like an ordinary amorous woman,

1. पुरुषः —सोमदत्ते ! अयमेव ते जन्मान्तरीयोऽपि पतिरासीत्, कर्मविपाकेन कियद्दिनं सुहृद्भावेन वर्तयन्तावप्युभौ पतिपत्नीभावेनाधुना गृहस्थ-धर्ममाचरन्तौ ऋणत्रयमपाकुरुतम् । Pu. Ra. II. p. 21

2. सोमदत्तः—सखे ! मा तावत् त्रासय मां । कथय किमुपलभ्यते ?

सुबन्धुः —किं स्वयमेव नावबुध्यसे त्वदीयमाकारविपर्यासम् ?

सोमदत्तः —कथञ्चिदाकारविवर्तनमनुभूयामि संस्कारशेषबलान्नावधारयामि-सम्यक् स्वरूपं । Pu. Ra. II. p. 17

Somadattā is feeling ashamed of what has happened. She is very much upset at the very thought of her parents who would be extremely sad about the change. In this play, both the friends are behaving in an exemplary way, unlike Sumedha who had to struggle against temptation all the time, and the love-stricken tempter Sāmavati of the other play. Though only two women are depicted here, and the author calls it a *Prahasana*, this play seems to achieve the real aim of dramatic art, i. e., to impart instruction and provide enjoyment through imitative representation.

Mathurā Prasāda Dikṣita is another modern author who has enriched the Sanskrit dramatic literature. He has written two plays with mythological and religious themes, one *Bhaktasudarśanam* and the other *Śaṅkaravijayam*. *Bhaktasudarśanam* deals with the story of King Sudarśana of Ayo-dhyā, as found in the *Devībhāgavata*.¹ It is a story that illustrates the result of the staunch devotion to Mother Durgā. The young prince Sudarśana left helpless by the untimely death of his father, is shown to be attaining victory over his enemies, winning the hand of the princess of Kāśī and also getting back his kingdom, by the grace of Mother Durgā, whom he worshipped in all faith.

The theme is political as well as religious. The whole story revolves round the clash between the two step-brothers, Śatrujit and Sudarśana. Though the former is a younger son, his grand-father, being a stronger man, insists on this boy's succeeding to the throne and this unjust claim on the part of a mighty man, causes the strife. Thus, it being a battle that is dramatised and heroic sentiment being the main one, there is naturally little scope for portraying female characters. Still, two important women, the respective mothers of the two princes with their maids-in-attendance, are presented in this play.

In the course of the play, we see that these two women

1. *Devībhāgavatam*. III. Chs. 14-25.

are in no way less important than the male characters. Manoramā, the elder queen, is a devoted wife, a loving mother and a heroic woman with self-respect and dignity. We see her after the sudden demise of her husband, in the midst of the trouble and turmoil of the fight between her father and the father of Lilāvati, her co-wife, for the sake of the respective grandsons. It is difficult to see whether Lilāvati had any hand in kindling, or at least in fanning the fire of family strife. But, it is quite clear that Manoramā kept completely out of the whole affair until the strife actually broke. Till the death of the king, there seems to be no ill feelings between the two queens. It is rather the ambition of Yudhājit for the sake of his grandson that starts the trouble. Manoramā's anxiety is only for the safety of her little son, and her own father. But, when her father is killed, the battle lost, and everything at a stand-still, she is not the person to sit down and weep.

As a true Kṣatriya woman, her first impulse is to take up the sword and fight the enemy for the sake of her son.¹ At the same time she would not act thoughtlessly and on impulse. She realises the strength of her opponents only too well, and also her own weakness. She shows the common-sense to understand that tolerance is the best part of valour and so, willingly accepts the tactful suggestions of the minister Vidalla. Her faith and devotion, her courage and wisdom, and her unlimited love for her son, are well proved in this play.

As the mother and guardian of the young prince, she is participating in all discussions about the future plans. When Sudarśana is advised by his well-wishers to go to the *Swayamvara* of Śaśikalā, the queen offers to accompany him.

2. मनोरमा—किं कुर्यां कथमेष मेऽस्ति तनयो रक्ष्यो रिपोः क्रौर्यतः ।

शौर्यं वा विदधीय वीरवनिता वीराऽस्मि सुक्षत्रिया ॥

Bh. Su. I. 12

When Bhāradwāja points out that she is only a weak woman, her spirited answer is, "I am a Kṣatriya woman, and if nothing else, I can atleast avenge the death of my father."¹ She is not unaware of her own weakness or the superior strength of her opponents. In the end, she is able to persuade her friends to allow her to accompany the prince to Banares. Throughout, she is keeping by the side of Sudarśana, protecting him in every way by heroism, wisdom and also her all-pervading motherly love. She commands respect and devotion, all around her, by her noble nature, broad-mindedness and courage.

Lilāvati, the other queen, is seen only once on the stage, when the war was over and her own son was defeated and killed; Sudarśana goes to her to apologise for being the cause of killing his step-brother, her son. She appears to be a quiet, submissive and loving woman. Having lost all she had in this world, she is a helpless destitute at this stage. Still, she is not bitter towards anyone. She is reasonable enough to understand the real situation, and also the unjust actions of her father. When Sudarśana went to her with his newly wedded wife to get her blessings, with exemplary simplicity and soft-heartedness, she says, "I am so pleased with this behaviour of yours. Knowing my father's unspeakable desires about you, I have been worshipping the Lord and praying that He may save and protect you. It is His unlimited grace that has enabled me to see you unhurt today. May you live long and rule the kingdom happily."² These words

1. भारद्वाजः—त्वं तु अबलाजातिः । पुत्रि ! त्वं किं तत्र विधास्यसि ?

मनोरमा—महाराज ! अहं सुक्षत्रियाऽस्मि । पितुर्वरं शोधयिष्यामि ।

युधजितं रणे यातं कुटिलं वीरमानिनम् ।

निहत्यात्मपितुर्वरं शोधयिष्ये हृदि स्थितम् ॥

Bh. Su. III. p. 51

2. लीलावती—(शिरसि स्पृशन्ती) तवैतदाचरणेन अहमतिप्रसन्नाऽस्मि ।

त्वयि स्वपितुरनिर्वचनीयामिच्छावमगत्य भगवांस्तव रक्षार्थं

prove her goodwill and also her forgiving nature. We cannot forget that it was due to Sudarśana that her own son was dead. She reminds us of the famous idealism of Mother Gāndhārī who would not say anything else to her son except remind him that, "where there is virtue, there is victory," even when the latter came to her for her blessings for the last time.

Śaśikalā, the princess of Vārāṇasi, is a young girl of marriagable age, and so, the king arranges for her *swayamvara*. In the meantime, Goddess Durgā, the Mother of the Universe, showed Sudarśana as her future husband in her dream. The faith and devotion of the princess was so firm and her sense of morality so high, that she refused to go to the assembly of the kings, who had come there to woo her on her father's invitation. She argues correctly that a woman chooses only once, and having done that with the help of the Goddess herself, it is not proper for her to enter the assembly and look at other kings with the same intention.¹ When her mother forces her at the instigation of the king, her father, she falls at her feet and pleads, "How can I disgrace our noble family by going to choose a husband once again, after the Mother of the Universe herself has joined my hands with those of Sudarśana? How can I become a blemish to our family?"² Her faith in the dream and devotion to the Goddess are so great, that she dares send a messenger to the prince a

बहुतरमाराधितः । मद्भाग्यात्सफलीभूतमाराधतम् । यदक्षत-
स्त्वं दृष्टोऽसि ।

Bh. Su. VI. p. 49

1. शशिकला—स्वप्ने सुदर्शनो वृत एवेति नाहं पुनर्वरणार्थमन्यं निरीक्षिष्ये ।

Bh. Su. IV. 3. p. 64

2. शशिकला—त्रिलोकजननी स्वयं समेत्य मम सन्निधौ

सुदर्शनकरेण मे करं सममेलयत् ।

पुनः पुनरहो कथं क्रियेत तव कन्यया

पतिग्रहणमार्यकं कुलं नहि कलङ्कयताम् ॥

Bh. Su. IV. 3. 14

love-letter. We are reminded of Princess Rukmiṇī who wrote a similar letter to Kṛṣṇa in the ancient days. Śaṣikalā is, in short, a self-confident, idealistic girl, who is an asset to any family or nation.

Priyamvadā and Sulochanā are the two maids-in-attendance at the court of Subāhu. They are very loyal and dutiful servants. They make it a point to know every happening at the court, in order to save their mistress and her son who are surrounded by enemies. Though women, they show extraordinary capacity to manage things in the right way, and also unflinching loyalty at all times. There is one other maid, present in the play. She is the devoted friend of Śaṣikalā. She is clever and resourceful enough to help the princess in her plight. All these women characters in this play are not just lifeless creatures, put there in order to humour the audience, nor are they treated as mere objects of enjoyment for men. After a long period of slumber, woman seems to have come forward to take her rightful place in society. A change of attitude on the part of writers is indicated for the first time in this play. Though this play has its source in the epics, the development of the plot and the characterisation show definite refinement and good taste. The female characters depicted here definitely show the dawn of a new era.

Śaṅkaravijayam is a play in which the victory of the great religious teacher Śaṅkarācārya is depicted. There is only one female character presented. She is the maid-servant of Bhārati, the wife of Maṇḍanamiśra, the famous opponent, and later, the disciple of Śaṅkara. Though a servant, she is shown as learned and capable of composing poems. This, once more, goes to prove the attitude of the author towards women in general. The same attitude is seen in his historical and social plays, which shall be dealt with later on.

Durgabhyudayam is another drama with a religious theme. Pandit Chhajjūrāma Śāstri has taken the story of Mother Durgā coming to kill the terrible Asura called

Mahiṣa, as found in the Devī-Māhātmya. The story has been faithfully followed by the author, as found in the Purāṇa. The Goddess, who was created by the energy, lustre and strength of all the gods put together, is the only female character depicted in this play. The Divine Mother as Śakti—Power—to protect and save all good people is the personification of love and kindness towards those in trouble, while hard and firm in her treatment of the evil forces. Thus, depicting the Divine Mother in her true colours, the author has succeeded in holding up the ideal of motherhood once more. It also rouses the finer feelings in the minds of all and makes them worship the all-powerful and all-pervading Śakti as the supreme deity.

Dharmābhyudaya by Śrī Meghaprabhācārya is an original play based on the glory of the Jaina *Dharma*. There are three female characters presented, Śachī, the wife of Indra, Ratī and Prītī, the wives of Kamadeva. All three are divine-beings, and are brought on the stage as counter-parts of their husbands. The theme is philosophical and the depiction of characters are only as personifications of abstract qualities as in allegorical plays. So, there is not much to comment on. The existence of women characters add to the beauty of the play and its effect on the stage. Perhaps, that is the main intention of the Ācārya in introducing them.

Bhartr̥hari-Nirveda of Śrī Hariharopādhyāya, describing the how and why of the sudden turn of mind to asceticism of King Bhartr̥hari, has its theme based on legendary history. The only female character is Bhānumatī, the queen of Bhartr̥hari. The purity and brilliance of her character leave the readers with their heads bent in adoration. Her love for her husband is such that the separation, even for a minute, is unbearable to her. When the king once praises the courage of those women who enter the funeral pyre of their husbands in order to save themselves from the grief of separation, Bhānumatī, in a matter of fact manner, replies, "This is not

very much laudable that they need the funeral pyre to burn them, as if the terrible fire of separation is not enough to strike them down.”¹ This sounds rather a challenge to women as a whole, though perhaps the queen did not mean it as such. Bhartṛhari could take it only as a presumtuous statement, because he could not believe in the existence of such love. The result is his disastrous decision to test his chaste and devoted wife. He goes to the forest on a hunting expedition, and sends word that he is dead. The result was a foregone conclusion, though completely unexpected by the king, who could not believe in the sincerity of his noble wife. Bhānumatī, the devoted wife, fell dead, the moment she heard about her husband’s demise. The noblest ideal of conjugal love is thus depicted in this play.

The king is stricken with sorrow and repentance. When all attempts fail to console him, his *Guru*, Gorakhanātha comes on the scene with a broken plate, and proves by a practical and ridiculous example, the transient nature of the material things. The king becomes a changed man, and renounces the world. This is not what the ministers and people wanted. So, by yogic powers of the *Guru*, Bhānumatī is brought back to life with the hope that her love and devotion may make the king turn towards the worldly life once more. Nothing avails, because, now, the king was firm in his convictions about the illusionary world. Neither wife, nor son could attract him any more. He tells the pleading Bhānumatī, “When I die, then you will die once again. So, now I wish to attain a state which is beyond old age and death by the power of yoga.”²

1. भानुमती—आर्यपुत्र, एतदप्येतासां व्यवसितमसदृशमेव प्रणयस्य यज्झटिति
प्रज्वलितं विरहानलं परिहृत्य चितानलमपेक्षन्ते ।

Bh. H. N. I. p. 9

2. राजा—अत्रियमाणे मयि भवती प्राणेन वियुज्यते नियतमेव ।

प्रतिकारमत्र योगादजरामरभावमहमीहे ॥ Bh. H. N. V. p. 29

Bhartṛhari crowns his little son as the king and leaves for the forest. The only consolation Bhānumatī gets, is the parting words of the preceptor, "Devi, You will still meet with your husband at the time of eternal salvation."¹

The theme is a new one altogether, and the treatment of the plot, both from the literary as well as the dramatic points of view is excellent. Bhānumatī, as seen from this play, is a loving and tender-hearted wife, firm as a rock as far as her devotion to her husband and chastity are concerned. She represents a type which goes to prove the real integrity of Indian womanhood, as understood by the ancient seers, and seems to be a pointer towards the new era in the lives of women in modern India. But, as a play propagating detachment and asceticism, even such a woman is finally left to wait for the fulfilment of her rights, till the time of *Amṛtī-karṇa*. This only shows the peculiarity of human nature, which would always serve ego first, and consider every thing else secondary.

The next play with its source in the Purāṇas, is the *Naladamayantīyam* by Śrī Kālipāda Tarkācārya. Damayantī has been brought on the stage in the middle ages by Rāmacandrakavi and also Nilakanṭha Dīkṣitar. This heroine began to attract attention, only in the last century. The author follows the story of the *Mahābhārata* faithfully. Of the female characters, only the two friends of Damayantī are the inventions of the poet. So also is the Viḍuṣaka among the male characters. The allegorical touch is found here in so far as that *Kali*, *Moha* and *Viveka* are as persons brought on the stage.

The author seems to have a high regard for women in general, because, Damayantī is made to play a very prominent part throughout in the course of the action. Woman is no more an object of pleasure and a thing of beauty to be

1. गोरक्षः—देवि, अस्ति ते भूयः स्वामिनोऽमृतीकरणसमये समागमः ।

the title suggests. This is the first play on this theme. Though, the epics have always been the source-books for all Sanskrit plays, never for once has this heroic princess, who was so firm in her devotion even before the actual marriage and so courageous as to follow the God of Death Himself, has ever been portrayed. Of course, it did not serve the purpose of the earlier law-givers and their followers to reveal the real greatness of women, because, that would have automatically proved their own unjust attitude. This would have been detrimental to their propagation of renunciation as the eternal goal. But with changes in times and ideas, these really idealistic women naturally had to come on the stage to stop the fast deteriorating sisters and show them the old and refreshing path, which is ever new. The result is seen in the many Sanskrit dramas with Sāvitrī, Damayantī, Śaibya, and such others in the leading role.

This is a one-act play with only four characters—Sāvitrī, Satyavān, Yamadharmā and Sage Nārada. The only female character depicted is Sāvitrī herself. The incidents of the one day, on which Satyavān was destined to die, are treated in three scenes. Sāvitrī is the ideal for all women in humility, purity, chastity and selfless devotion to her husband. All these qualities in her are brought forth in such a clear and simple style that any one can easily follow the whole course of incidents without any difficulty. The significance of portraying Sāvitrī as the heroine of the play, is made clear through the words of Satyavān at the end thus—"My lady, you are indeed great. *Bhārata* can hold her head high on account of such wives as you, who are idealistic and pure. The honour of Hindu society is safe because of women such as you. The enthusiasm of devoted and loyal wives are kept alive by women such as you. I am indeed happy with you."¹ It is quite obvious that the intention

1. सत्यवान्—देवी ! त्वं धन्याऽस्मि । त्वाहस्या आदर्शभूतया पतिव्रतया
भार्यया भारतस्य मस्तकं उन्नतं भवति । हिन्दुसमाजस्य गौरवं

those, who were illiterate in general. The woman is held in high regard, as can be seen by the blessing and praise bestowed upon Damayantī by Yamadharma himself. He says to the father, "Because of this daughter of yours, who possesses all good qualities, your very dynasty is purified."¹

For the first time in the arena of the Sanskrit literature, after the time of Kālidāsa, we are seeing man and woman on an equal status. Here, in this play, Damayantī is as important as Nala himself. At no time is she out of our minds while we are seeing or reading the play. It is, as suggested by the name of the play itself, the story of Damayantī and Nala. Once more, we are able to see woman as a supplement and complement to man. The author seems to have read into the spirit of the story as found in the *Mahābhārata*, and to have brought out clearly, the message contained therein, namely, man is never complete without his complementary counterpart—the woman. The idea of *Kali* trying to separate Damayantī from Nala has its own significance in the *Mahābhārata*. It actually indicates that, Man without his Woman, or *Puruṣa*, without his *Śakti*, is easily accessible to the attacks of all evil powers. This idea is brought out clearly in this play. It is only after achieving this end, that *Kali* could harm Nala. Nala regains normality only after he gets the shock of his life by hearing the made up story of Damayantī's re-marriage. The significance of these episodes as depicted by the Ācārya is noteworthy and very valuable as an eye-opener to the poet's attitude towards women. All the qualities that the author of the *Mahābhārata* wished to uphold to posterity as ideals, are brought to the limelight for the first time in the dramatic arena, in this play. Of all the plays that trace their sources to the legends or myths of the Purāṇas, Bhānumatī of Śrī Hariharopādhyāya, and Damayantī of Śrī Kālipāda Tar-

१ धर्मः—महाराज भीम, प्रसामान्यगुणायाम् दुहितुः समुत्पत्त्या पवित्रः सर्व एवान्ववायस्ते ।

kācārya lead the way once more towards the position of women as it should be in society.

Praśāntaratnākara is another play by the same author with another Pauranic theme. The outline of the story is more or less as found in the *Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, but according to the foreword of the play, the author has taken the same from the Sanskrit *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* and the Bengali *Kṛittivāsa Rāmāyaṇa*. The name Ratnākara for the Brāhmin who fell into temptation and then got redeemed by the timely intervention of fate in one disguise or the other, is the poet's imaginative contribution.

The main female character herein is Leelāvati, a Brāhmin widow who is fancied and won by King Kāmeśwara. Her life is depicted here as an example of the results of one's own actions. The poet takes pains to uphold the fact that, all women are good by nature. Leelāvati, forced by circumstances, deviates from the righteous path. As a result, she ends up in an untimely and infamous death. The disgracefully amorous conditions in the court of King Kāmeśwara seem to reflect ordinary aristocratic life of the day. But the poet leaves no stone unturned to show that, woman and woman alone can be the redeeming factor for man. He puts forward the general idea prevalent in society about women and then forcibly repudiates it in more than one place. The conversation between Vasantaka, the friend of the king and the Brāhmin is an example.¹ In this context, we are actually reminded of the ordinance of Manu, "Where

1. वसन्तः — पतिव्रतेति वाङ्मात्रमेतत् ।

ब्राह्मणः — कथमिव ।

वसन्तकः — स्त्रीणां पातिव्रत्यं स्वर्णकाराणां चौर्यविमुखता च इत्येतदुभयमेव नऽसमं प्रतिभाति ।

ब्राह्मणः — धिक् प्रहसनम् ! मूढ ! ब्राह्मण ! स्त्रीणां गौरवं न वेत्सि ? येनैवं परिहासकृते महापातके पतन्तमात्मानं न हणत्सि । मूढ !

After some time, Priyamvadā also joins the king and Anasūyā, and in the course of the conversation, she reveals the curse of Durvāsā, which according to this play, is known only to Priyamvadā,¹ contradictory to the information we have in the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*. In fact this ring-episode and the curse of Durvāsā are the inventions of the master-poet, as we have already seen in a previous chapter. The question of Anasūyā, "Why did you not tell this even to me?"² and its answer, are meant in this play to show that the curse was known only to Priyamvadā, and that she kept it to herself. To say the least, this seems to be very unnatural, considering the love, the three girls had for each other and the oneness of heart Anasūyā and Priyamvadā exhibit on all occasions in the first play, where they are brought before us. No useful purpose seems to have been served by this deviation. The final remark of Anasūyā, "Oh ! Śākuntalā, these sorrows are brought upon you by yourself !"³ is unlike the kind, understanding and considerate hermit-girl introduced to us by Kālidāsa.

Reading through the play, one is reminded of almost the very words of the *Abhijñānaśākuntala* and also *Uttararāmacarita*, in parallel circumstances.⁴ Examples are found almost

1. प्रियम्बदा—मया च स वृत्तान्तोऽद्यावधि न कस्यचिदपि कथितः ।

Chh. Śā. p. 29

2. अ. अनसूया—मह्यमपि न कथितं त्वया ?

आ. प्रियम्बदा—शोकनिवर्तनायैतदाचरितम् ॥

Chh. Śā. p. 21

3. अनसूया—हा ! सखि ! शकुन्तले ! आत्मकृतान्येतानि तव परिपीडनानि ।

Chh. Śā. p. 21

4. अ. अनन्यचित्तेन विचिन्तयन्ती यमद्य पश्यस्यतिथिं न मां यत् ।

शृणु स्वधर्माचरणप्रमत्तां स्मरिष्यति त्वां न ततः स राजा ॥

Chh. Śā. 42

आ. आः अतिथिपरिभाविनी ।

विचिन्तयन्ती यमनन्यमानसा तपोधनं वेत्ति न मामुपस्थितम् ।

स्मरिष्यति त्वां न स बोधितोऽपि सन्कथां प्रमत्तः ॥ Ah. S. IV. 1

enjoyed at the sweet will and pleasure of man. Damayanti, here, is a living, moving, intelligent and praise-worthy individual, full of common-sense, understanding, love, kindness, self-confidence and self-respect. She is not a fickle-minded and frail being to be tossed here and there by fate. In her maiden days alone, she shows the courage of her convictions. Of course, we have to remember that in the original story itself, Damayanti was portrayed thus. But we also remember that no heroine, who showed any individuality or heroic traits was accepted by the authors of the middle ages or even of older times, as a pivot for dramatic plots. Only the later part of the eighteenth century could find authors, courageous enough to give the women their due share of independence. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, Damayanti had been introduced to the people to a certain extent. But the depiction here, is very different even from the works of those authors.

In the *Mahābhārata*, it is the divine interference and supernatural powers that helped Damayanti, many times, to keep herself chaste and pure. In the marriage-assembly itself, it was only due to the kind consideration of the gods that she could choose the right Nala. In the wilderness, while attacked by the Kirātārāja, it is once again the lustre of her chastity that burnt the villain to ashes. But the author who belongs to the present age of science, keeps close to nature and shows only the plausible happenings, at all points. Here the ordinary *Kirātas* try to molest the helpless woman in the forest, when the head of the tribe, the Kirātārājā, enters the scene and saves her by his own authority. Damayanti's courage and generosity are clearly brought out in this episode. The place of women in society seems to have been accepted as one of equality at least in theory.

In this play, while the Prākṛt is used for inferior characters, Damayanti speaks Sanskrit. Only the *Kirātas* and the menial servants take to Prākṛt. Perhaps, it is spoken by

of the author is to bring out the importance of women in the society, and also to show what the real ideal of Indian womanhood was and ought to be.

The works of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti have given a new idea to a modern poet. The abandonment of Śakuntalā by Duṣyanta, and the banishment of Sītā by Rāma are two incidents in the ancient epics which are parallels. The main difference lies in this, that while, Śakuntalā was accepted back by the king in due course, the separation was eternal in the case of the other couple. The *Uttararāmacarita* of Bhavabhūti, and specially the third and fourth acts therein tickled the fertile imagination of the modern poet, Shri J. T. Parikh, who tried to portray the meeting of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta in the hermitage of Kaṇva once again, as a shadow of the said acts of Bhavabhūti's play.

Just as Rāma entered Janasthāna after killing Śambuka, in this play, Duṣyanta is shown to be coming to the hermitage of Kaṇva, where Anasūyā and Priyamvadā meet him. The old memories wake vibrant while Śakuntalā accompanied by Sānumatī, just as Sītā with Tamasā, witnesses and even participates in the agony of the king. In the introduction, Sānumatī enters in the form of a hermit-woman and meets the deity of the hermitage like Ātreya met Vāsantī in the older play. The only difference here is that the conversation of Tamasā and Muralā, and also that between Vāsantī and Ātreya are more or less reflected in this one scene, in so far as this introduction tells us about the incidents in the interim period between the abandonment of Śakuntalā, and the present unexpected meeting. It is made clear to the audience that now Śakuntalā is the mother of a son, who was born in the hermitage of Mārīca, and is five years old.¹

सुरक्षितं तिष्ठति । पतिव्रतानां चोत्साहो वर्धते । त्वयि अत्यन्तः

प्रसन्नः अस्मि ।

Sa. N. p. 15

1. यदा शकुन्तला राज्ञा न परिगृहीताऽपरिणीतपूर्वेयं मयेति, तदा प्रस्थितेषु

The advent of King Duṣyanta in the *Āśrama* also is told, along with the fact that Śakuntalā herself is present in the vicinity, hidden though she is by *tiraskaraṇi*.¹

In the main act, Śakuntalā is presented as looking around her old home and feels sad because, she has been the cause of sorrow even for animals, while her attention is suddenly attracted by the familiar voice of Duṣyanta, just as Sitā was attracted by the words of Rāma in the *Uttararāma-carita*. The king sees the familiar places, remembers the past happy days in the company of Śakuntalā, faints more than once, like Rāma in the earlier play, and is again brought back to consciousness by the touch of Śakuntalā who is hidden by *tiraskaraṇi*. Anasūyā enters the scene and leads him on into the hermitage where Śakuntalā and Sānumatī follow them. Many incidents such as the story of the deer Dīrghāpāṅga, are remembered, almost in the same words as found in the fifth act of the *Abhijñānaśakuntala*.² Duṣyanta remembers these incidents and regrets his forgetfulness.³

कण्वशिष्येषु, मेनकया ज्योतिर्वपुषा समुत्क्षिप्य सा भगवतो मारीचस्याश्रमं
नीता । तत्रैव सा सुखं बालकं प्रसूता । अद्य पुनः पञ्चवर्षदेशीयः स सज्जातः ।

Chh. Śā. I. 2

1. शृणोतु भवती । अद्य खलु नारदप्रमुखाद् गन्धर्वगणान्महेन्द्रभवने महाराज-
दुष्यन्तेन अत्रितपोवने कृतं दानवपराजयमाकर्ण्य मया चिन्तितं । नूनं प्रति-
निवर्तमानेन तेन राजर्षिणा आश्रमपदमिदं द्रष्टव्यमिति । ततस्तन्मात्रहृदया
तपस्विनी शकुन्तला क्षणमात्रमपि तस्य दर्शनं लभेतेति कृत्वा मया सार्धं
तिरस्करणीप्रच्छन्ना तपोवनविचरणाय भद्रिज्ञापनाद्भगवता मारीचेनानु-
ज्ञाता । शकुन्तला च केनापि व्यपदेशेन मयेहानीता । Chh. Śā. I. p. 3

2. अ. अनसूया—देव ! इतः पश्य—अस्मिन्नेव शकुन्तलासहचरः कुञ्जेल-
मासीस्तदा—सत्वरं । Chh. Śā. I. p. 20

आ. शकुन्तला—तदा त्वमित्थं प्रहसितोऽसि । सर्वः सगन्धिषु विश्वसिति ।
द्वावप्यत्रारण्यकाविति । Ab. Ś. V. p. 64

3. दुष्यन्तः—स्मारितोऽप्यस्य तदा शकुन्तलया न स्मृतवानहं मन्दबुद्धिः ।
Chh. Śā. I. p. 5

the women are worshipped, the Gods live there,"¹ which was forgotten during the past many centuries. The modern writers as a whole, and Sanskrit dramatists in general, seem to be trying to bring back the ancient culture, in which woman was the pillar of the society.

Śrī Kālipāda Tarkācārya seems to have a special tendency towards allegory. Kumatī and Sumatī, the two female characters, who try to attract Ratneśwara are examples of the same. Actually, these two are the bad instinct and the good instinct personified. Similarly, we see many characters, such as *Moha*, *Dharma*, *Adharma* and others. The aim is to turn the materialistically inclined minds towards spiritual achievements which is the only way to eternal bliss. Hence, it is only natural that these various opposites predominating man's nature should be portrayed. This play, as all the other plays of this author, has many a lesson for the immature souls of this era; and many high ideals, forgotten throughout the ages, are upheld in an attractive way. A new idea, a fresh outlook on life, a new attitude towards society and also its best counterpart,—*woman*—is put forward by this author. Though he is fully conscious of the old dictum of Bhavabhūti, that people become bad while testing the women and the speech,² he is out to prove that it is the people that are to be blamed for this injustice and not their victims.

There are also quite a number of small plays in this era based on the various stories told in the *Mahabharata*. One such is *Sāvitri-Nāṭakam* written by Śrī Kṛṣṇamaṇi Tripāthī. The theme is the story of Sāvitri and Satyavān as

स्त्री मातृरूपा स्तनदुग्धदायिनी सर्वं जगत् पाति शुभानुकम्पया ।

भक्त्या स्त्रियो यत्र भवन्ति पूजिताः सर्वे सुरास्तत्र वहन्ति तुष्टतां ॥

Pr. Ra. II. p. 39

1. यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवता ।

यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तित्राफला क्रियाः ॥

Manu. III. 56

2. यथा स्त्रीणां तथा वाचाम् साधुत्वे दुर्जनो जनः ।

U. R. Ch. I. p. 4

at every step.

One interesting characteristic of this play is that all characters except Duṣyanta, are female. All of them are only shadows of the same characters presented in the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, now presented in a different setting. Still, there are differences noticeable between the original Śākuntalā, and the Chhāyā Śākuntalā of the present play. This one seems to be more conscious of her own rights and also the wrongs done to her by Duṣyanta. Only after she hears of the curse from Priyaṁvadā, does she feel a little sympathetic towards the king. Perhaps the explanation of this difference may be found in the time element, that is to say, the different times in which this latter work has been written. There are some traits in all the women characters in this play, which go a long way to show the change that has come over women in general.

Udgatṛ Daśanana by Śrī Mahāliṅgaśāstri, is the latest play written on the basis of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The theme is the raising of *Kailāsa Parvata* by Rāvaṇa, as told in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Of course, the imagination of the poet has enhanced the skeleton, and many characters are invented. The nurses of Skanda and Gaṇeśa, namely Pradoṣa Saṁdhyā and Śivarātrī are the only two female characters present on the stage while Goddess Pārvatī is referred to, along with her friend.

This poet has written six Sanskrit plays, namely—*Laundinya Prahasana*, *Prati-Rājasūyam*, *Markaṭamardalikā*, *Śṛṅgara-Nāradyam*, *Ubhayarūpam*, *Kalīpradurbhāvam*, and *Ādikāvyaodaya*, besides the play in question. The names are not suggestive enough to tell us all about the stories of these various plays, nor are they available to the student for perusal. So, a detailed study of all these plays could not be made here. Still, this one play, *Udgatṛ Daśanana*, in itself, is enough to prove the extraordinary poetic talent and imagination of the author.

The predominant sentiment is heroic, having a lively atmosphere with much humour sprinkled all over. The story, in a nutshell, goes thus. While Lord Śiva was relating the story of some past ages to Goddess Pārvatī, her friend, Vijayā, listened at the keyhole, and was detected by a sudden exclamation the latter made, at some wonderful thing that she happened to hear in the course of the story. The enraged Śiva cursed her to wander about as a Piśāci. This caused a disruption between Śiva and Pārvatī, and as a result, Śiva entered into a long *Samādhi*, while Pārvatī went to the surrounding *Śaravaṇa*. Meanwhile, Rāvaṇa, very proud and self-confident, attacks and conquers his own step-brother Kubera. In that hour of triumph, he thinks himself to be the highest and mightiest of all, and decides to attack Lord Śiva. While approaching the abode of the Lord, his *Puṣpaka* is stopped by an unknown hand, and he himself is thrown down to the earth by Nandi. Though thus baffled, the aggressive Rāvaṇa tries to raise the Mountain Kailāśa itself with his twenty hands. The mountain begins to shake and the frightened Pārvatī runs to Lord Śiva for protection and embraces Him.¹ He, seeing the chaos caused by Rāvaṇa, bends His toe, and thus fixes Kailāśa in its original position crushing the twenty hands of the trouble-maker in the process. The shrieks of pain from the demon-king fills the whole world. In the end, by the advice of Sumālī, Rāvaṇa begins to sing the praise of Lord Śiva, which pleases Him and the imprisoned hands below the mountain are released. Pleased by the songs of praise and also the power of endurance shown by Rāvaṇa, Lord Śiva gives him the sword called *Candrahaṣa* and also many boons which made up for all the tribula-

1. कैलासाद्रेस्तोलनं तावदास्तां

तेनैवास्मिन् दृष्टवीर्ये प्रतुष्येत् ।

प्रस्ता देवी मानमुत्सृज्य कण्ठं

जग्राहेति स्थाणुरन्तः समोदः ॥

Ud. D. VII. 111

tions, he had undergone.

In the first act of this play, we have Sandhyā and Rātri, the two maid-servants, who come with the story of Kubera's defeat. In the third act, Cancalā, the friend of Rambhā, Kubera's daughter-in-law tells us about the latter going to keep an appointment with her lover. An unknown voice is heard warning Cancalā that, if she does not hurry to take her friend immediately to the protection of Goddess Gaurī, there is every possibility of her falling a prey to the lust of Rāvaṇa.¹ Cancalā saves her friend with the help of the clouds.

As we have seen from the summary, this story deals with the celestial beings, and has hardly any relation to this world of ordinary human-beings. The sentiments depicted are *Vīra* and *Adbhuta*, and only a small episode in the life of the demon-king is treated here. But from what we read, some ideas can be gathered about the women characters as conceived by this author. The nature of women, according to him is to be talkative and be able to exaggerate things; and this has been clearly illustrated by the examples of the two maids-in-attendance. The easily annoyed temperament attributed to women is depicted in showing the anger of the Mother of the Universe at the just punishment given to her friend. Introducing the episode of Rambhā, the amorous desires of women and their resourcefulness are shown. Studying all the female characters portrayed in the play in person or by reference, the woman that emerges, is fickle, shallow and of light nature. There are no noble traits or commendable characteristics shown by a single one among them.

We have studied a few of the Sanskrit plays based on themes belonging to the mythological and epic sources. The

1. अयि ! सखीप्रणयपेशले ! चञ्चले ! एतादृश्येव ते संकेताभिलाषिणी सखी भविष्यति दशकन्धरपरिभाविता, यद्यप्यपसंपर्कसंभावनं कैलासशरवणे गौरीपादमूलमेनां न सद्यः प्रापयिष्यसि ।

Ud. D. III. p. 25

same writers have been very enterprising and have also taken themes from the pages of history. M. M. Yājñika, Pañcānana Tarkaratna Bhaṭṭācārya, Haridāsa Siddhāntavāgīśa, Śrījivannayāyatīrtha, Mathurā Prasāda Dīkṣita, are a few, whose works are taken for study here.

Mulaśankara Māṇikalāla Yājñika has written three plays, the *Saṁyogitā-Swayamvaram*, the *Chhatrapati-Saṁrājyam* and the *Pratāpa-Vijayam*. The names are indicative of their respective themes. They deal with the incidents during the period of Muslim supremacy. It is well-known in history that Jayacandra of Kannauj was responsible for helping the Muslim kings to enter the country. The struggle of Pratāpa Siṁha, the hero of Rajasthan, to keep his own against Emperor Akbar, also is an important landmark in Indian history. The next phase in which Indians once more realised their power was at the time of Śivājī. These three main landmarks are chosen as themes by Yājñika for his plays, at the time when India had realised her plight, and was struggling to regain all that she had lost in the previous centuries.

The *Saṁyogitā-Swayamvaram* is the story of the union of Princess Saṁyogitā with Emperor Pṛthvīrāja Chauhāna, who was then ruling at Delhi. The play is based on the striking events of a period when feuds between the Hindu kings gave opportunities for foreigners to interfere in the internal affairs of the country. Dr. Yājñika is not taking up any controversial points. He actually deals with only the love of Saṁyogitā for King Pṛthvīrāja, and the happy union of the two with the blessings of Jayacandra.

The Natī is the companion of the Sūtradhāra. The women characters depicted other than the Natī, are Princess Saṁyogitā, her mother, her friends, the wife of Pṛthvīrāja and the Princess of Karnaṭaka in the guise of an attendant in the palace of Jayacandra. Pṛthvīrāja is considered as an upstart and enemy by Jayacandra, while his daughter is deeply in love with Pṛthvīrāja. In the beginning of

the play, Saṁyogitā is sad because of her father's decision to marry her off according to *Swayamvara* rites. King Jayacandra, not knowing the reasons of her sadness, asks his wife to find out. The mother, though in her daughter's confidence, knowing Jayacandra well enough, tries to dissuade the princess. But the Rajput girl is firm in her choice and decides to face the consequences of her father's rage than be fickle in her love. Jayacandra, in his anger, sends her away to a distant fortress. Saṁyogitā sends a message to her lover from that exile just as the ancient heroine Rukmiṇī did; and requests him to come and rescue her. By the efforts of Karṇāṭakī, and the influence of the queen, Pṛthvīrāja succeeds in carrying away the princess. In the end, Jayacandra is pacified and he goes to Delhi in order to perform the marriage of his daughter according to her own desire, and gives her his blessings.

There are enough evidences throughout the play to show the changing ideals of society. According to history, Saṁyogitā is courageous enough to cast the *Varamālā* on the statue of King Pṛthvīrāja, in the open assembly and defy her own father. In this play also, the girl does not lack in courage to follow her heart's dictates. But, at the same time, she shows due obedience to her parents, and also consideration for her family prestige. What she could not achieve, openly, she tries and achieves by tact. Saṁyogitā as portrayed by Dr. Yājñika combines in her all the fine qualities inherent in a girl of noble lineage.

The queen mother is an ideal mother as well as an ideal wife. She understands her husband and her daughter equally well, and is loving, patient and tactful enough to manage everything smoothly. Madanikā, and the other friends of Saṁyogitā also show the same refinement and culture that characterises the princess and the queen. Karṇāṭakī is a type by herself. She appears on the stage in the guise of a dancing-girl though her character and behaviour belies the appear-

rance. In the course of the play, her identity is revealed and the revelation only ennobles her all the more. She is really the Princess of Kārṇāṭaka, who is in love with Pṛthvīrāja and takes the guise of a dancing-girl in so that she may be of service to the man whom she loved. When the message of Saṃyogitā is received by Pṛthvīrāja, she is sent to Jayacandra's court in order to find out the real situation and also to find ways and means to carry the princess away according to the request of the latter. Throughout, this maiden impresses us as the highest ideal of selfless love and sacrifice.

Ichhini Kumārī, the wife of Pṛthvīrāja is another female character in this play. Her husband is faithful and loving to her. His affection for her is not fickle. It is more due to chivalry than anything else that Pṛthvīrāja accepts the plea of Princess Saṃyogitā. He has full confidence in his wife, unlike the heroes of our ancient plays, who made their wives a possession to be enjoyed. Pṛthvīrāja actually shares all his responsibilities with her. When he was called upon to leave the kingdom for a while, he puts all responsibility on her.¹

Dr. Yājñika shows the veil to be a sign of respect to elders and those whom one respects. This idea is made clear by the statement of Kārṇāṭakī in the court of Jayacandra, where, she puts on her veil, as soon as she recognises the disguised Pṛthvīrāja. When she was questioned as to the reason why she, a courtesan, should cover her face in the presence of anyone, she answers, "Seeing the friend of my previous master, I covered my face to show respect to him (the master). That king is the only man before whom I feel bashful, even as the night before the sun."²

1. पृथ्वीराजः—तद्राजकार्याणि निर्वहन्ती परिपालय तावदन्तरम् ।

Sa. Sw. III. p. 45

2. कर्णाटकी—मित्रं विलोक्य पुरतो मम पूर्वभर्तु-
स्तस्यादरात्सपदि संवृतमाननं मे ।

By her soliloquy, the audience is informed of her real feelings for King Prthvīrāja. It was because of her love and respect for him that she was able to recognise his identity even in disguise, and the natural feeling made her automatically cover her head when suddenly she was brought face to face with him. After the first moment of surprise was over, she realised her duty, that, she has to save him from being recognised by his enemies, amongst whom he had come for the sake of Saṁyogitā. We are aware of the custom prevalent in North India, even today, of women covering their heads before their elders, and all those to whom they have to show respect. Thus, covering the head is a token of respect, and the words of Karṇāṭakī go to prove this.

The behaviour, conversation and manners of all the women characters in this play give evidence enough to prove the comparative freedom enjoyed by women in that era. The intelligence, cleverness and fine sense of dignity shown by the various women throughout the play are proofs for the good opinion the author has about women in general, in contrast to the poets of the previous centuries. Although, this too is a love-story, like the *Rukmiṇīpariṇaya* or the *Subhadrāharṇa*, the difference in the behaviour-pattern of the heroines there, and in this later play, has its own story to tell. It plainly indicates the renaissance in the position of women during the present century.

The *Pratāpavijayam* is another drama by the same author, dealing with the story of the struggle between Rana Pratap of Chittore and Emperor Akbar. The only women characters presented herein are the sister of Bhagwānadāsa, the sister of Prthvīrāja Rāṭhore, a courtier in Akbar's court. Both these ladies seem to be introduced to show the heroism,

एकः पुमान् स पृथिवीपतिरेव यस्माद्

रात्रिर्यथा दिनकरात्समुपैमि लज्जाम् ॥

Sa. Sw. IV. 9

self-respect and self-confidence evinced by Rajput women when occasion arose. The story has more to do with battles, struggles and diplomacy, than normal life.

The *Chhatrapati-Sāmrājyam*, which treats the third phase of the Muslim rule in India, tells us about the glorious incidents during the ascent of Śivājī, the Mahārāṣṭra-Chief to the throne. Sakhibāī, his wife, and Jijabāī, his mother, are the important female characters depicted. Both are shown as lending a helping hand to the chief in all matters concerning the kingdom as well as ordinary life. His words to his wife are proof enough to show what the woman's position was in his experience. He says in one place, "Encouraging me when I am off to the battle-field, taking care of me when I come back tired, pacifying me when I am agitated, and humouring me when I am tired and worn out, you are the real giver of happiness at all times."¹ Her answer is quite natural, though very significant. She says, "My Lord, it is only the duty of the real Kṣatriya wife, who is the companion in all *dharma*s—*Śahadharmacārini*."²

The position of woman as the supplement and complement of man seems to be emphasised by the author again and

1. शिवाजी—प्रोत्साहनेन समराङ्गणतत्परस्य

प्रत्यागतस्य च पराक्रमणानुयोगः ।

उद्वेजितस्य नयमार्गविकल्पनेश्च

श्रान्तस्य नर्मवचसा तनुषे सुखं मे ॥

Chh. Sā. III. 16

2. सखीबाई—आर्यपुत्र ! धर्म एवैष सहधर्मचारिणीनां क्षत्राङ्गनानाम् ।

निसर्गत एव—

तव व्रते मे हृदयं प्रतिष्ठितं

मनश्च मे त्वन्मनसैकतां गतं ।

त्वयि प्रसन्ने भवति प्रसन्नं

समाकुलं चाकुलिते त्वयि प्रिय ॥

Chh. Sā. III. p. 17

again in this and similar statements. The mother, as the most honoured soul in Indian life, is seen in the reverence that Śivājī shows to his mother. Throughout the play, we find that Śivājī is depending on the blessings of his own mother, and the helps of Divine Mother Bhavānī Who alone has a place in his reverence equalling to that for his mother. The greatness of women, and their value as wives and mothers in the lives of human-beings are very much emphasised by this author almost at every step in all his three plays. Still, women are not shown as coming out in the open very freely. We have already seen the use of veil as a token of respect to the elders in the earliest plays. In this one, the stage-direction is found saying, "enter the queen and the queen-mother within the inner apartment."¹ While the serious matters of the court or the kingdom are discussed, the women are participating, but not sitting along with the men. They have special seats within hearing, arranged in the inner apartments. We are reminded of the practice of women belonging to the big *Zamindar* families managing the affairs from behind the curtains, which was prevalent in Bengal and other North Indian provinces, till very late in the present century itself. The manager of the estate or other responsible employee used to be called to the inner apartments, and the mistress used to speak to him and give him the necessary instructions from behind the curtain. This was really the transition period, when women were beginning to come out and take their own place in all things that mattered. After the stern and strict seclusion of women for many centuries, the dawn was in sight for women once more. Dr. Yājñika is witnessing and reproducing this renaissance in his plays.

The Mahārāṣṭrian women were always bold and heroic as the Rajput women and the women of Kerala in the

1. ततः प्रविशत्यन्तर्यामिनी राजमाता राज्ञी च ।

South. Unlike in the North, women in the South were never in seclusion. The influence of Jijābāi and Sakhībāi over the Mahārāṣṭra Chief is a well-known historical fact. Dr. Yājñika chose these facts and dramatised them, at a time when example and precept, both were needed to encourage heroism and patriotism in the country, specially among the women who were the mothers of the nation.

Amaramaṅgalam, by Pañcānana Tarkaratnācārya is another play tracing its source to the history of the Rajput kingdom of Mewar. The theme of this play is the re-capture of Chittore from the Mughal Emperor. Many drastic changes have been made in the body-plot of the play, the most important being, the introduction of the queen—the wife of Amarasiṁha—who is actually shown as wholly responsible for the victory of Amarasiṁha. Thus, it is the nobility and strength of woman that is upheld, though indirectly, in this play. In the introduction of the book, it is clearly said, that all the women characters here are inventions of the author.¹ Needless to say that the invention must have been made with some particular purpose in view.

Even as Kālidāsa raised Duṣyanta to the height of an ideal hero, full of noble qualities, so also Śrī Tarkācārya has made out Amarasiṁha, the dissipated son of the noble Rana Pratap, to be a really heroic and patriotic king, worthy of his ancestors. The conquest of Chittore by Amarasiṁha with the clever and timely help of his wife, and the consequent disgrace of Mānasiṁha in the Moghul court, form the main story of this play. The dissipated life of Amarasiṁha, is represented as a means, the king used to deceive his opponents. This is a masterly touch of the poet to add to the glory of his hero, which moulded the infamous story of Amarasiṁha, as found in history, into such a noble form. The madness of Mānasiṁha and the suicide of his simple and innocent wife, Vanalata, also are invented by the Ācārya.

1. स्त्रीपात्राणि च कल्पितानि ।

The queen, her friend Subalā, Virā, the courtesan, her old mother Jaratī, the Princess of Kooch Bihar namely Vanalātā, and the Bhairavi from Orissa, are the female characters, portrayed herein. The queen is a noble and heroic woman, quite a worthy successor to Padminī and Karmavati. She is adorned with all the qualities required by the dramatist for a *Mahādevī*, and belongs to the type called *Svādhīnapatikā* by them. She represents a harmonious combination of Dhārīnī and Sitā as portrayed by Kalidasa, and also of Śakuntalā as seen in the *Mahābhārata*. The love and broad-mindedness of Dhārīnī, the self-confidence and anxiety for the fame and welfare of her husband shown by Sitā, and the courage and self-dependence of Śakuntalā, of the *Mahābhārata*, are manifest together in this queen. Her eagerness to console even Virā, whom she knows to be a rival in her love, is indeed extraordinary. Her nobility and generosity are such that the courtesan who came with the intention of destroying the dynasty as a whole, herself gets converted into a devoted follower and well-wisher. It is true that her love for the king was a strong element that contributed towards this conversion. But, her final submission has its root cause, in the noble character of the queen herself as is readily accepted by Virā.¹

Amarasimha is always careful to seek the opinion and advices of his wise queen. While serious political questions are discussed, the king specially informs the queen and asks her to be at hand to get first-hand knowledge of the whole situation.² Evidences of her active participation in politics

1. नारायणः—देवदेवीनिर्मलचारित्रदर्शनोद्बद्धपूर्वसंस्कारा चित्तशुद्धिमभजत् ।

A. M. III. p. 50

2. प्रतिहारी—देवो विज्ञापयति—अभ्यन्तरसभामण्डपे चित्तोराक्रमस्यामन्त्रणं भवति । भवत्यास्त्वया अन्तःपुरमध्यस्थितया श्रोतव्यमेतत् ।

A. M. II. p. 35

are many.¹ Her advice to teach the parrots to repeat the insulting words used by Pratāpa Simha at an earlier time and to leave them near the palace is a proof of her cleverness and knowledge of psychology.² The king himself recognises the wisdom of his wife without any hesitation.³ The courage and wisdom of the queen as praised by the *Kancukī* gives us an idea as to all the activities of the queen which ensure success for the king and his army.⁴ The quick resourcefulness of the queen is shown in the episode of her acting as the Goddess of Chittore. When the soldiers were losing heart, and almost running away, she climbs up the *Nyagrodha* tree near by, and speaks the words of blessings, which acted as magic on the failing spirit of the army. Her words put new life into the disheartened Rajputs and the result was undoubted victory. The king is aware of the greatness of his wife, and is also willing to accept it openly. He unreservedly accepts, "You are my teacher in politics; you are the persevering disciple to me in the science of war; in all dangers, you are the strong-hearted minister; and you are also

1. नारायणः — मानसिंहोद्वेजनाय देवीनिवेदनं च उपलभ्य महान्तं परितोष-
मनुभवति गुरुदेवः । A. M. III. p. 50
2. नारायणः — मानसिंहं प्रति सुगृहीतनाम्नः प्रतापसिंहस्य समुचिताधिके-
षवाचमनुपठन्ती शिक्षिता शुकावली राजावसथसमीपे विसर्ज-
नीयाः । A. M. IV. p. 52
3. राजा — अतो यन्मया कांक्षितं तदिदानीं पतिहितरतायाः ते प्रयत्नेनैव
प्राप्तोऽस्मि । A. M. IV. p. 69
4. कञ्चुकी — समरसिंहशङ्कितहृदया देवी समरसिंहद्वितीयमरण्यचारिणं देवं
धनुर्धरवेषेण यदनुससार, यच्च गहनावृतदेहा वीरानुसरणपरात्
दस्युरूपिणो जवनान् अलक्ष्यशरसम्पातेन निजघान, न तत्केवलं
सुवला जानात्यहं च जानामि । देवस्य वर्षद्वयव्यापि व्यसना-
भिनयरहस्यं सामन्तरप्यविदितवृत्तान्तमासीत् । यदद्य च
हयारोहिणीरवेशप्रतिच्छन्ना तथाविधसुबलासहितादेवी देवमनु-
ससार, तन्मे वीरायाश्च केवलं परिज्ञातं । A. M. V. p. 88

the real friend and wife who is the same in weal or woe.”¹ We hear an echo of the words of Aja in the *Raghuvamśa*, though in different circumstances.²

All this being thus, still, this noble woman never even once forgets her womanhood, or the fact that her place is within the house in normal conditions. She says, “The enthusiasm and energetic action of women exists only when the husband is present, not otherwise.”³ When everything is said and done, and the final end is achieved, the queen decides to go back to her rightful place. She accepts that she acted on her husband’s advice when she took the guise of a soldier and entered the battlefield to help him. In so many words, she makes it clear that she feels shy about the whole thing when she remembers it in ordinary times.⁴ She hastens to return to the inner apartments of the palace.⁵ Though all this is true, the queen, who ought to be beside the king at the time of the celebration of victory, is absent. The complete omission of her at that glorious moment sets one still

1. राजा—त्वं राजनीतिनिगमे मम शिक्षयित्री

शिष्यासि मे रणकलासु कृतश्रमा त्वं ।

सर्वापदि स्थिरमतिः सचिवोऽसि मे त्वं

त्वं गेहिनी सदृशदुःखसुखा सखी च ॥ A. M. V. p. 99

2. गृहिणीसचिवः सखी मिथः प्रियशिष्या ललिते कलाविधौ ।

करुणाविमुखेन मृत्युना हरता त्वां वद किं न मे हृतम् ॥

R. V. VI. 67

3. देत्री—अहो पुरत एव भर्तुः स्त्रीणामुत्साहः सुखञ्च भवति । न पुनरन्यथा ।

A. M. IV. p. 71

4. देवी—आर्यपुत्र ! यद्यपि आपद्धर्म ईदृश इति त्वया उपदिष्टञ्च मया

अन्तःपुरिकाविरुद्धं यत् किमप्यनुष्ठीयते, तथापि तत् स्मरन्त्यः पश्चात्
लज्जा भवति ।

A. M. V. p. 100

5. देवी—अद्य जाता सिद्धिः । इदानीं अप्रकाशनीयरणकर्मा अवरोधजन

इति आर्यपुत्रनिर्देशं स्मरन्ती निवेदयामि अश्वारोहवेषप्रतिच्छन्ना

इदानीमेव नगरं गन्तुम् ।

A. M. V. p. 100

thinking—why. Why has the author left her out? Is it because he wishes to show that the woman prefers to be always in the back-ground as the guardian angel and to avoid the limelight? Or does he still think that the control of the back-door is the best suited job for the really strong and noble woman? The answer has yet to be sought. Perhaps, the author thought that though the worth of woman is proved, the time is not ripe enough for her to come out to accept publicly the glory that she so well deserves.

Subalā is the trusted friend of the queen. She is a devoted friend, trusted companion, constant well-wisher and most obedient attendant of the queen. Her courage is proved by her following the king as a body-guard in the guise of a man. The king is only reflecting the general feeling when he says, "Subalā! It is indeed the greatness of our motherland Mewar, that even noble women like you accept the guise of a man, leaving the soft qualities common to women, to act as heroic and hard as hundred heroes put together."¹ In every thing that the queen does, Subalā has a hand, and we see that she is almost the counterpart of the heroic saviour of Chittore.

Virā is a type by herself. She is a courtesan by birth, and is sent by Mānasimha to Chittore to deceive Amarasimha. She enters the court of the Rajput king in the guise of a princess in distress with her attendant, who is none other than her old mother Jaratī in the guise of a servant. The idea is to seduce Amara, and finally to entrap him. The old woman is always nagging her daughter for not doing what she has come to achieve. But, the girl's own innate goodness is awakened by the noble qualities of the king and the queen. She finds herself helpless because of

1. राजा — सुबले ? महिमायं मेवारवसुन्धरायाः यत्र त्वाहशीकुलाङ्गनाऽपि
पुरुषवेशपरिग्रहेणाङ्गनाजनसुलभं सादेवमपहाय शतवीरसमान-
पौरुषा समरलीलामभिनयति । A. M. V. p. 98

her love and admiration for the king. After entering the palace of the Rajput king, Virā becomes a changed person. She begins to get disgusted with her own profession and conduct. Her noble nature rebels against the way she has to treat her own mother, though it was at the instigation of the latter herself.¹ This is only one of the many small instances which go to prove her real nature. Finally she is convinced of her mistake in trying to deceive the good king and queen and firmly refuses to continue on the same lines. It is then that old Jaratī decides to do herself what her daughter refused to do. The conversation between Virā and her mother in the second act of the play, is an eye-opener to the characters of both.

Jaratī is a typical courtesan with all the convictions and beliefs that such women generally have. It is she who manages the whole show of the plot hatched by Mānasimha against the king of Mewar, making her daughter only the bait. She was sure of the implicit obedience of her daughter till they entered the presence of King Amarasimha and his noble queen. But, once there, the whole situation changed. The magnetism of the good people was irresistible to the simple girl who was herself good and noble by nature. The old woman tries her level best to corrupt the girl. Her idea about women is that they should be just as flowers are to bees as far as men are concerned and should always try to intoxicate men by throwing different baits to attract them.² When she found that she has no influence over her daughter any more, she felt sure that the king and queen are very bad because they have led her daughter the wrong way.³

1. युवतिः—मातरं हज्जेति भणामि । का गतिः ? A. M. I. p. 14

2. जरती—जाते ? यथा एषा पुष्पोद्यानभूमिर्मधुकरैरुपास्यते, तथा वाराङ्गनाः पुरुषैरुपासनीयाः । केवलं सौरभमिवोद्यानेन मोहनोपायो वाराङ्गनाभिवितस्तिव्यः । A. M. II. p. 26

3. जरती—(आत्मगतम्) ताम्याम् द्वाभ्याम् मे ऋजुका दुहिता मोहिता । A. M. II. p. 26

After this, she herself decides to destroy the enemies. But unfortunately, for herself, and her benefactor Mānasimha, she is detected and defeated in her purpose by faithful followers of the king and queen.

There are two more female characters in this play, Vanalatā, the wife of Mānasimha and a Bhairavī, who is very devoted to the simple and innocent Vanalatā. Vanalatā is the princess of Kooch Bihar, married to Mānasimha for political ends. The girl herself is a loving and a devoted wife to this servant of the Mughal Emperor, but her love and devotion is not at all reciprocated. Mānasimha is a politician, pure and simple, and he has no time for any humane considerations. This poor girl is lonely and sad, with the only support of the Bhairavī, who is sent to her by the queen mother of Kooch Bihar to look after the interests of her daughter, whose plight, the mother understood with her natural insight.¹ Vanalatā, being a foreigner, does not know Sanskrit and so Bhairavī is forced to talk in Prākṛt.²

The little that we see of Vanalatā is enough to tell us that she is really a Vanalatā—a creeper of the wilderness, a child of Mother Nature—as innocent as a deer, who is feeling uncomfortable and unhappy in the new surroundings of her husband's palace. She is living in hopes which are never fulfilled because of the soldierly nature of Mānasimha whose one end and aim in life is to destroy Mewar. When he completely fails in this mission of his, he loses favour with the emperor whom he served all his life, and that is the end of all his lifework also. Naturally, he goes mad, and in his madness treats his wife in such a way, that

1. भैरवी—राजभाषानभिज्ञा राजमहिषी कौचराजदुहिता वनलता सततं रक्षणीया । तस्याः खलु परिरक्षणाय परिसान्त्वनाय च काम-रूपादुपामन्त्र्य सविनयमभ्यर्थिता ग्रहमनुप्रेषिता कौचराजमात्रा ।

A. M. VI. p. 109

2. भैरवी—न खलु देवीं वाचमियं सम्यग् बुध्यते, तत्प्राकृतमाश्रयामि ।

A. M. VI. p. 109

the disappointed girl commits suicide to relieve herself of her agony.

Reading through the whole play, we find, we are carried on to a high moral plane, where women with their love, spirit of sacrifice, heroism and simplicity, have created a new world. Though good and evil are shown in their respective capacities, the net result is an elevation of the moral standard, where the brilliant, but cool lustre of women is predominant. Though there are many other Sanskrit plays written in the present century on similar themes, none of them has reached this height in depicting women with so much natural glory, and innocent yet elevating simplicity.

M. M. Haridāsa Siddhāntavāgīśa is another writer, who took up the incidents of this period for dramatisation. This name is not in any way unknown to the scholars of the present century. His tremendous achievement in the Sanskrit world, the edition of the *Mahābhārata*, with the Sanskrit commentary and the Bengali translation, a book constituting of 159 parts and 50,000 pages, is now before the public as a monument to his love of Sanskrit and his own scholarship. This great soul has found time to play with the ordinary type of people also, and has condescended to enrich the dramatic literature and fulfil the aim of true poetry. The result we find in three dramas, the *Vaṅgīyapratāpam*, the *Mewārapratāpam* and the *Śivājivijayam*, all published in the last one decade.

The first play deals with the incidents in Bengal when Sherkhan was the ruler there, and Akbar was ruling over India. There are three women characters and a few dancing-girls presented on the stage. The conditions described in the play remind us of a time when the conquerors were suppressing the conquered, and the life, property, honour and religion of the Hindus were at stake. Śaṅkara, one of the

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A. M. VI. p. 109

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main characters, describes the situation clearly enough.¹

Śaṅkaracakravartī, a Bengali Brahmin, persecuted by Nawab Sherkhan, leaves his wife, home and relations and takes refuge with King Pratāpaditya, son of Vikramāditya of Yashore. Pratāpa, though heir to the throne, is not very much liked by his father because of a prophecy that he would become the murderer of his father. The play relates how he was sent to the court of Akbar on the pretext of seeing the world and acquiring more experience, how he rose in favour with the Emperor, and how finally he conquered the Nawab and established his own rule over Bengal. It is really the description of a series of battles between the Yavanas and the army of Bengal led by Pratāpaditya and his two trusted friends.

The heroic sentiment is predominant. Still, there are two female characters : one, Kalyāṇī, the wife of Śaṅkara, and the other, Padmā, the wife of Pratāpaditya. We hear about Kalyāṇī in the first act itself, when Śaṅkara says, that he had to leave his beloved wife to her fate, because he himself was persecuted by the Nawab for no rhyme or reason. He is also anxious about her, because he knows, she may be tortured by the enemies. It is in the third act that we come face to face with her. Though left alone with only a maid-in-attendance, Kalyāṇī shows full self-confidence and courage. Her honour is valuable to her, and she has no intention of surrendering herself to any one. The little we see of her on the stage, is enough to convince us of the heroic nature and noble character of the women, as seen by the present author. It is not the fickle-minded, frail and

1. शङ्करः — नवीनस्त्रीमात्रं गणयति विलासोपकरणं

प्रजानां सर्वस्वं करगतनिजस्वञ्च मनुते ।

तृणस्तेये दण्डं प्रणयति परप्राणहरणं

निरीहाणं खेलाकुतुकमसुभिः पूरयति च ॥

pleasure-loving creature that is conceived by him when he thinks of a woman. Kalyāṇī stands against the Yavanas as much as she can, and then she is saved by the timely arrival of her husband with Pratāpaditya, and is sent to the protection of the Prince's wife, who is also a very devoted and obedient woman as could be seen from the glimpse that we get of her in the sixth act of the play.

Vāmā, the maid-servant of Kalyāṇī, is a courageous and generous character, staking her all in the service of her mistress. Though a poor servant-woman, she shows the innate goodness and reliability of women, in contrast with the frailty of women as propagated in the earlier days.

There are a few dancing-girls brought before the Nawab for his enjoyment. Some of them are willing slaves to the pleasure-seeking Nawab, while the others are captives of war, who are compelled by every method to surrender themselves to the lust of the man. The fifth act well serves its purpose of exposing the cruel and villainous ways of the Muslim ruler towards his Hindu subjects.

Of all the female characters depicted in the play, Kalyāṇī is the ideal that the poet wishes to hold up to the people for emulation and admiration. It is only proper that a play, written at the time of the renaissance in the social life of India, upholds the heroic sentiment and courage in woman as the redeeming features that would help her to come back to her own, in every walk of life.

The pages of Rajput history are full of the sacrifices and heroic deeds of their women, who considered their honour more valuable than life itself. The next play of the same author deals with the same period of Rajput history as treated by Yājñika. Rana Pratap is the hero of the play, and it deals with the incidents that happened during his struggle with Emperor Akbar. Kamalā, the wife of Pṛthvirāja, Gaurī, the wife of Rana Pratap, Indirā, the daughter of the Rana, the door-keeper, the maids-in-waiting, and a

few dancing-girls are presented in this play.

Each of these characters has a story to tell in her own way and a little lesson to teach to posterity. Kamalā, the wife of Pṛthvīrāja Rāthore is forced to go to the *Meena Bazar*, which is presented in the second act of the play as *Mahilāmela*. The lady finds out, accidentally, the implications of attending this *mela*, and tries successfully to escape from attending it. Though we meet with her only in this connection, we know her character fully well within those few minutes. She is a chip from the old block; a spark from the fiery Rajput women, who taught their children by example and precept, that honour and character are the most precious jewels of womanhood. The way in which she manages to escape from the *Mahilāmela*, is in itself a pointer towards her self-dependence, determination, presence of mind and courage.

Gaurī, the wife of Rana Pratap is another type. She shows us another aspect of the Rajput women—the soft, loving, suffering and patient wife and mother. She is brave and understanding enough to follow the Rana in his hardships, which he voluntarily accepted for the sake of the honour of his motherland. Her life is an example of the homely type of the Rajput woman, who is loyal and devoted to her husband in weal or woe.

Indirā is only a child. But, in her shines the spark of future glory, which unfortunately is put out by the unbearable sufferings she had to undergo due to the exile, her father was taking upon himself for the sake of his country. The dancing-girls and the door-keeper are true to the nature of the general characters they are expected to represent as seen in the world.

The third play by the same author, treats with the incidents of later history, where the Mahārāṣṭra-Chief Śivāji rose to power, at a time when the people of India were descending the steps of cultural and social glory. It is stated in

the introduction that the idea of staging such a play is to encourage the spirit of self-respect and freedom.¹

The play begins with the student-life of Śivānanda, and ends with his becoming the *Chhatrapati*, the emperor of the Mahārāṣṭra. According to the acclaimed aim, the play is bound to be predominated by heroic sentiment; but that does not necessarily keep women characters out of the modern plays, as we have already had opportunities to observe. Jayantī Devī, the mother of Śivājī, Muktakeśī, the Bhairavī who is the friend and helper of the former, are the main female characters. Apart from these, there is the queen, the wife of Śivājī, and also the Brahminī, the wife of Maheśwaraśāstri,

Jayantī Devī, the mother of Śivājī, is first presented in the fourth act of the play. She appears to be discontented, at the very outset, because of her being a woman.² The conversation between Bhairavī and Jayantī Devī reflects the conflicting ideas about the position of women in society at the time of the dawn of freedom. The first part of this act is a discussion between the two friends, in which the queen-mother is finally convinced of the greatness of women and also the justice in restricting women by rules and not men.³ The whole system of the Hindu law concerning women's conduct is explained here in a very interesting and convincing way. The greatness of women, the necessity of her being devoted to one man only, the rules against widow-remarriage, and such other things are discussed clearly for the first time in detail.

We find a definite contrast between the mother and father of Śivānanda. While the woman is rightly angry

1. सूत्रधारः—येन हि साम्प्रतं सर्वे एव स्वाधीनतां कामयते वर्यं च तदुद्दीपन-

मेव कञ्चित् प्रबन्धमभितेतुमभिप्रेतः । Ś. Ch. I. p. 3

2. जयन्तीदेवी—देवी ? परं निर्विणाऽस्मि योषिजन्मना ।

Ś. Ch. IV. p. 38

3. Ś. Ch. IV. p. 38-41

at the unjust actions of the Muslim ruler against Sahanātha he himself, the man, who actually should have been disgusted, is treating the whole thing as a matter of course. It is the woman who is roused at the injustice and disgrace heaped upon the people by the ruler.¹

Muktakesī clearly states that Śivāji is, what he is, only due to the teachings, guidance and influence of his mother.² In the sixth act, once more, we have proofs of the queen Mother's heroism and clear insight into situations. While Śivāji is fighting at Bijapur and Shaistakhan takes the opportunity to attack Poona, it is the skill and courage of Jayantī Devī that saves the situation and makes it possible for everyone to take shelter in the strong fort at Parnaśāla.³ Again, when everything seems to be lost, and all men seem to be devoid of life and strength, it is she who comes forward with courage and self-confidence and decides to take the law into her own hands. She is not aware of the difficult conditions of the day. She regrets that the

1. जयन्ती—(सामर्पक्षोभम्) आः किमयं कियानन्यायः । यदसति दोषे प्रधान-
 पुरुषस्यैव कारानिक्षेपः ।
 इयं तावज्जगतो नीतिः—
 सदोषमपि वा मुञ्चेन्निर्दोषन्तु न दण्डयेत् ।
 सेवयेन्नापि वा रुग्णं न सुस्थजनमौपधम् ॥

Ś. Ch. IV. 16

2. भैरवी—त्वयि परमयि देशं कौण्डदेवे च लोकं
 गतवति तु जयन्तीशासनेनाशु वत्सः ।
 अलभत निजतेजः सूर्यवन्मेघयानात्
 अजनि च हृढमैक्यं सर्वजातैः स्वदेशे ॥

Ś. Ch. IV. 18

3. बलदेवः—तत्रापि जयन्तीदेव्या महादक्षता मन्तव्या । येन खल्वसौ दिल्ली-
 सेनायाः पुण्यपत्तनाक्रमणमाकर्ण्येव सहसाहतार्थं समस्तधनजन-
 मादाय निरन्तरायमेवाश्रयदिदं पर्णशालादुगंम् ।

Ś. Ch. VI. p. 56

Brahmins, the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas have become equally weak and useless.¹ Still, she will not lose hopes. "I shall take the lead if not the men, and put back the society in its place," she says confidently.² She is angry and ashamed that even Śivāji, who has been trained in the traditions of the great heroes of the ancient days, is failing in his duty and is behaving like a coward.³ When she was told that he is not a coward, but is only awaiting the opportunity, she loses all patience and says, "Let these wretched men wait for loopholes to get at the enemy; I shall in the meantime, organise a women's army and cross over the vast ocean of these enemies."⁴ It is not clear from the play,

1. जयन्ती—निर्वाणाग्निसमास्तपोविरहिता निस्तेजसो ब्राह्मणाः

निर्वीर्या इव निर्विषा विषधराः कार्याक्षमाः क्षत्रियाः ।

वैश्या वित्तविवर्जिताश्च पयसा शून्यास्तडागा इव

प्रायः कालवशाद्विलुप्तविभवा हन्ताधुना हिन्दवः ॥

Ś. Ch. VI. 4

2. जयन्ती—आस्तां तावत् । तथापि प्रतिकूले स्रोतसि निपुणो नाविको
नौकामिव समाजसंहतिं यथास्थानं स्थापयामि । अवश्यमेवाहं
तत्र प्रभवामि ।

Ś. Ch. VI. p. 58

3. जयन्ती—रामार्जुनप्रभृतिचित्रचरित्रजातम्

उल्लिख्य वाल्यसमयात् समशिक्षयं यम् ।

सोऽप्यत्र न त्रपत एव पलायमानः

किं भाष्यते सहचरोऽस्य समानवृत्तिः ॥

Ś. Ch. VI. 7

4. जयन्ती—तत् कापुरुषाश्चिरमेवान्तरमन्विष्यन्तु वैरिवर्गस्य । वयन्तु स्त्री-
वाहिनीं योजयामः । येन हि निर्जिते किल निर्जर्जरले—
चण्डी चण्डं प्रचण्डं प्रधनगजघटाटोपमाघट्टयन्ती
मुण्डञ्चोत्ताण्डवाच्यं रणशिरसि पुरा खण्डखण्डं व्यधत् ।
तद्वज्रोषं हि योषाबलमधिकबलं द्रागहं योजयन्ती
सैनापत्यं गृहीत्वा यवनजलनिधिं सम्पतन्ती तरामि ॥

Ś. Ch. VI. 9

whether she actually entered the battle-field or not, because we hear of Śivāji in the meantime winning back his capital. The next we hear of Jayantī Devī, is from Maheśwara, who gives news to Bhāskara, about the parents of Śivāji. Though Sahanātha is dead, broken-hearted due to the imprisonment of Śivāji, the queen-mother has decided not to burn herself with her husband, but to live and see the victory of her son.¹ Of course, history tells us that *Sati* was not compulsory among the Mahārāṣṭrians, though that was a custom which was honoured by all the North-Indian people. It is the reality that the poet is representing; but the very fact, that the poet is willing to leave the traditional ideals and show factual history, is an indication of the change of times and also the taste of the audience. Lastly, we meet with this noble queen, at the height of her glory, when she witnesses the coronation of her son, and decorates him with sandal-wood and gives him her blessings to rule as the protector and preserver of the cow and the Brahmins, like the ancient kings, Rāma, Yudhiṣṭhira and Nala.²

Throughout the play, the queen-mother seems to be leading the course of action. It is her teachings, her training, her chidings and blessings, that led the young boy, Śivānanda,

1. महेश्वरः — साहनाथः परलोकं गतः ।

भास्करः — हन्त ! भूस्वामी तत्र भवान् साहनाथः ।

महेश्वरः — अथ किम् ? एकतो वर्षीयान् द्वितीयतश्च श्रुतापत्यकारावाप्तौ
नितरामाधिना व्याधिना च धृतो जीवनं जहौ ।

भास्करः — अथ पतिव्रता जयन्ती—

महेश्वरः — न सहमृता । यादवी खलु सा यदुवंशयोग्यतेजस्विनी यवनजयं
तनयराज्यञ्चान्वीक्षितुकामा ब्रह्मचारिण्यास्ते ।

Ś. Ch. IX. p. 109

2. जयन्तीदेवी—(चन्दनपात्रमानीय) प्राणाधिक !

श्रीदार्यशौर्यधैर्येषु नलरामयुधिष्ठिरान् ।

अनुगच्छ चिरं स्वच्छस्तिलकाङ्किततत्रिकः ॥

Ś. Ch. X. 3

from victory to victory, inspite of the difficulties and defeats that he had to face at every step. Though this life-history of the Mahārāṣṭra Chief has been dramatised more than once in the present period itself, in no other work do we find the facts of history so prominently displayed about the part Śivāji's mother played in his life. Even in the three plays of the same author, women do not seem to have got this prominence as in this character particularly. Here, for the first time, a woman is portrayed with all the qualities required to stem the tide of deterioration that was overwhelming the society. Śrī Sidhāntavāgiśa has done a great service to the society and the humanity as a whole, in thus depicting women in their true perspective. Kalyāṇī in the *Vaṅgiyapratāpam* and Kamalā in the *Mewārapratāpam*, are only showing the first sparks of the torch, namely the real Indian womanhood which flames out in the character of Jayantī Devī, in his last play. Those two are courageous, self-confident and also careful to keep their purity at any cost. But, in this third ideal, we have the real *Śakti*, the power that is capable of leading mankind to eternal victory. For, when the eventful play is finished, the climax of victory attained, and Śivānanda is crowned as the all-powerful king, we are able to see a divine image, the protecting and saving deity, a calm cool, and dignified mother, with eyes full of happy tears at the victory of her son, standing in the shade far behind and looking into the distant future, uttering a blessing to posterity. This portrait of the mother is a special gift to India as a whole and particularly to the Indian womanhood, from the revered preceptor.

The wife of Śivāji is seen only in the last act where she is participating as the *Ardhānginī*—the better-half—of the king. The other female characters are just brought in to continue the course of action, and they do not show any special characteristics. The wife of Maheśwara portrays the typical Brahmin wife who is concerned only with her house-

hold affairs and nothing else in this world. Muktakeśī is a mendicant woman, a real friend and helper of Jayantī Devī, and one who helps not only her friend but the audience also, to understand things in their proper perspective. She is a contrast to many mendicant women, we have hitherto met in the Sanskrit dramatic arena. Of course, there is some resemblance between this Bhairavī and the Bhairavī whom we saw at the court of Mānasimha as the companion and protector of Vanalatā. But, Muktakeśī here is a real mendicant who combines in herself learning and worldly wisdom for the sake of the good of humanity. The element of personal interest, the Parivrājikā shows in the *Mālavikāgni-mitra*, seems to have taken a wide latitude now, as shown in this Bhairavī, who, though the friend of the queen, even as the former, is still making all her efforts towards the welfare of not one individual, but of the nation as a whole. There is much in common between the two, the Parivrājikā portrayed by Kālidāsa hundreds of years before and the Bhairavī painted by Śrī Sidhāntavāgīśa in the present era.

All the historical plays that we dealt with hitherto, concern themselves with the incidents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Those were troublous times, when constant feuds between Kṣatriya princes and Muslim kings were going on. Most of the incidents shown in the plays are not in any way fictitious. But, the Sanskrit plays written during those times, do not tell us about these heroic women who considered their honour more valuable than their lives and preferred to die honourably than live in shame. It is very significant that these stories were never taken as themes for plays, as we have already noticed. On the other hand, the plays written then, were only apologies to real dramas and the themes were either allegorical or drawn from the remote past of the Paurāṇika days. The general trend of those plays clearly shows the deterioration of women in all walks of life. On the other hand, the women, taken from

those days, but portrayed in the twentieth century, show a very different state of affairs. The queen, the courtesan, the servant and sage, all show a noble height of character and conduct, that any nation can feel proud of.

This discrepancy in facts and presentation, calls for an explanation. We do not have to go far to see the cause. The heroism, courage, self-respect and self-sacrificing spirit of the Rajput women were bywords, even in the mediaeval days. Still, neither those women nor their stories were brought forward and made immortal by the dramatists of the day. Even the characters such as Draupadī, Damayanti and Śāvitṛī were either ignored or shown as lifeless, stereotyped and love-stricken. The idea of any goodness in women had become something impossible in those days and the poets did not care to bring before the prejudiced audience anything that would offend their convictions. After Jayadeva, the plays seem to have deteriorated to mere toys meant to please the ordinary child-like minds of the general public. But, the latter half of the 18th century, showed a fast changing outlook on life as we have already seen. The twentieth century has seen many changes in the life of the people in general. One of the most important change is the awakening among the women. The battle for freedom in full swing forced the women also to the fore-front and gave them the much needed inspiration and initiative. "Man and woman are equal in status, but, not identical. They are a peerless pair being complementary to one another; each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived; and therefore, it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that any thing that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of both."¹ These words of Mahātmā Gāndhī seem to have been understood by the nation, and that led to a revival in the position of women. The realisation of the power of women as strength, mental

1. Mahātmā Gāndhī : Women and Social Injustice. p. 5

and spiritual, is what is seen in these plays that we have studied. Apart from the characters from the Purāṇas who are depicted in quite a different style in the modern plays, new types of plays, with more genuine characters are presented now. This, of course, is the reflection of the change in times and the mentality of the people in general. We see that more and more such plays are coming to be written and staged not only in Sanskrit, but in all the modern Indian languages also, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Another interesting historical play written during this period is a farce called *Canda-Tāṇḍava*, based on some facts of the last World War. The author says in his foreward, "This little work represents an imaginary picture of horrors sketched on the basis of the information regarding the last World War. It also portrays the reverse side of the picture with reference to India which is thought to be an abode of peace."¹

It is a play of serio-comic nature, and was performed at the historic *yajña* that was conducted in Delhi, in 1944. This play consists of two acts. The first act is led by a Russian leader, and all the Western Powers are shown as fighting with each other. Greed and anger personified are indicated as the source of this violent dance of the various nations. Towards the end of the first act, these evil personalities are shown as approaching India. The second act shows the approach of *Himsā*, the beloved of the three, namely *Krodha*, *Lobha* and *Pāpa-Puruṣa* as going on to Bhārata, but she is frightened of *Ahimsā*, who is ruling there.² The others drag her on. Then a man carrying things for worship enters the scene, and is attacked by the three evil personalities. Faith incarnate enters in time and at his very appearance,

1. Ch. Tā. Introduction. p. 1

2. मा खलु, मा खलु, अहिंसादेवीलीलास्थानं खलु भारतम् । यदि सा दृश्यते ?

the evil personifications disappear and the man goes forward to join the *yajña*.

This play is more or less in the strain of the allegorical plays of the earlier centuries. The abstract qualities are brought forward, such as anger, greed, violence, etc., and then the historical facts also are presented as cause and effect in a nut-shell. This can be taken as a historical play in so far as that it depicts some incidents of the last World War at random. The women characters are only *Himsā* and *Ahimsā*, both abstract qualities personified.

Bhārata-Vijayam and *Gāndhi-Vijayam* are two other most modern Sanskrit plays based on history, though they are actually very topical, in so far that they both are dramatising contemporary history, almost true to the letter. Mathura Prasad Dikshit, whose social plays and two religious plays, we have already studied, is the author of these two also. They deal with the incidents connected with the enslavement and independence of India. In the first play, the happenings of the one hundred and fifty years of British rule over India, are dramatised, and it ends with the achievement of Independence. The second is a play in two acts, tracing the career of Mahātmā Gāndhī. The first act deals with the incidents in South Africa, and the second, those in India, up till the Independence. As both these are dealing with contemporary history, there is very little scope for the play of imagination and poetic licence. The audience will be actually experiencing once more, the same things, that many of them had undergone on various occasions. The pictures of those incidents which are very near to our hearts are pictured in such forceful words, that we seem to be living in those days once again. One peculiarity in the *Bhārata-vijayam* is that most of the characters are representative in nature, and so do not serve us for any critical study of personalities.

Bhāratamātā, her friend, and the Rani of Jhansi are

the only female characters presented. Mother India, in her simplicity, trustfulness, love and compassion, seems to be a personification of the image described in the *Ānanda-Maṭham* of the great Bengali writer, Bankim Chandra.¹ Later on, when the real character of the British traders, who changed colours and became rulers, is revealed, we get a glimpse of the other aspect of Mother India, the 'Sinhavāhinī'. The exalting picture of the Mother is painted in such a way, that comments become impossible. It is the Divine Mother that is depicted and that completes, all that could be said. The friend of the Mother is there only as an eye-witness to all happenings. The Rani of Jhansi also is only a photo from real life as history shows her.

In *Gāndhivijayam* too, the only female characters are, Mother India, her friend Sarasvatī and Kastūrabā, the wife of Mahātmā Gāndhi. So, only general comments are possible in connection with this play. One feature noticeable in these two plays is the Prākṛt used. In the dramas of olden days, women, menials, children, and people of lower status were made to speak Prākṛt. The principle, suggested by that practice seems to have been accepted by this author. But, at the same time he adjusts the idea to his own purpose. The Prākṛt used in the first play, is very much akin to Gujarati and Marathi languages. In the second one, he has reduced it to simple Hindi alone. Perhaps, the author accepted this method, in order to make it more realistic and suitable to the times. Thus we have come to the last available historical plays of this era.

Coming to the third set of plays, according to our division, we find that the language, the topic and the treatment take us much nearer to the everyday-life of the common man. We are no more in the classical age or in the

1. शुभ्रज्योत्स्नापुलकितयामिनीं फुल्लकुसुमितद्रुमदलशोभिनीं ।

सुहासिनीं सुमधुरभाषिणीं शुभदां वरदां मातरं ॥—वन्दे मातरम् ।

atmosphere of the legendary world. Quite a number of plays have come into existence in the Sanskrit language itself. We are not able to make an exhaustive study of all these, because all are not yet available in print. Many of those that are printed, are available only in magazines.

Quite a number of plays were written and published by the late Kṣamā Rao. Most of them are based upon topics touching the problems concerning women in the modern days. *Balavidhavā*, is one of these. It is a play in three scenes, describing the plight of a girl who was married to an old man when she was a child of seven and consequently became a widow in the same tender age and is doomed to untold misery for the rest of her life. All her plays deal with the evils in society, such as child-marriage, dowry-system and other evils which persist in society to a large extent, even to this day.

All these plays depict the terrible conditions in which Indian women are living and the unbearable experiences they have to undergo in peculiar circumstances. The plays bring forth quite clearly, how the laws which were meant for protection, have turned to be the most destructive weapons for the women. Fortunately for us, this is a dark past, over which a curtain can be easily drawn, though they have their own lessons to teach to posterity. These plays, though short, are still landmarks in the history of the long and strenuous journey of the Indian womanhood, from the most ancient, ennobling days, through the down hill march, to the next ascent which has just begun.

Viśvamohanam is a play written by Tādpatrikara, who has adapted the first part of the famous play of the German author Goethe, namely *De Faust*. Goethe's *Faust* is based on the legend of one Dr. Faust who is believed to have been a historical person in the middle ages. He once made a contract with the devil who helped him to get all worldly pleasures, but after the given time was over, claimed him as his victim. He is supposed to have died a broken-hearted

man in the year 1540. Goethe wrote his drama in two parts and the first part formed the basis for the Sanskrit play under study. It is a love episode in which Faust, the scholar, falls in love with Margaret. It is a tragedy. The main characters in this love-story—Faust, Margaret, Martha, Valentine, and the spirit Mephistophelis—are replaced by Prabhākara, Hariṇī, Rādhā, Tāraka and Mohana respectively. Though the German play served as the basis for this Sanskrit one, there is a vast difference between the treatment of the plots and the atmosphere in both.

The Sanskrit play is not a tragedy as its original. Prabhākara, a great scholar and a pure soul, is led into temptation by Mohana, an ordinary evil man. Hariṇī is also led into the wrong path by the influence of Rādhā, an old courtesan, who is working at the instigation of Mohana. When finally this undesirable intimacy leads them into trouble, Prabhākara leaves her to her fate and disappears. When both outlive the storm and tempest of passions, they turn into good and God-fearing souls. Of course, Hariṇī tries to commit suicide when she finds herself deserted and disgraced, but, is saved from the tank by a disciple of saint Viveka. Prabhākara also, repentant, is flying from places and people, to no avail, and finally gets rest in the hermitage of Viveka as chance would have it. After coming to recognise each other here, under the guidance of Viveka, every thing ends well.

Mohana is really the personification of illusion. He, along with Rādhā, who was playing as a puppet in his hands, goes to the abode of Yama, to live there for some time, before resuming their work of havoc once more on the Earth. Thus ends the play.

Hariṇī, the heroine, her old mother and Rādhā are the three female characters in this play. Hariṇī is a good and simple girl. She knows her real position, and is very careful not to cross the limits of propriety. Even when persuaded

by Prabhākara, who is highly educated and cultured, she firmly answers that she is not an equal match for him, and so she cannot be a party to do anything wrong.¹ Neither is she prepared to overstep the respect and obedience due to her elders. Actually, she goes away. It is because of the constant and clever efforts of Rādhā at the instigation of Mohana, that she, in her simplicity, falls a victim to temptation. But, she being innately good, the fall could not be eternal. The saint Viveka comes to her help.

The life of Hariṇī is a good example for the maxim that no good person can come to a bad end. Even if such a person falls into the clutches of temptation and illusion, it cannot last long. Mohana himself expounds the ways of the world thus—"In this world, everyone enjoys the result of his or her own actions, but blames me for everything."²

The mother of Hariṇī is a poor and ignorant woman who has a deep love for her children and tries her level best to keep them in the right path. She has implicit faith in all, and would not doubt anything or anybody; so much so, that even the terribly deceptive Rādhā is trustworthy in her eyes. It is this ignorance of the old woman, that gives a loophole for the illusion to work; which along with the youthful desires of Hariṇī, paves the way for the downfall of the latter. The result is that the poor woman herself dies broken-hearted at the disgraceful disappearance of her beloved daughter.

Rādhā, the personification of temptation, is in her full strength working for the downfall of her trusting friend,

1. हरिणी—समं न वित्तं न कुलं न वा श्रुतं यदावयोः प्रेम कथं भवेत्तदा ।

समेषु मैत्री विषमेषु नो कदाप्यनीतिकृत्यं त्वतिदुष्करं हि मे ॥

V. Mo. III. p. 17

2. मोहनः—मर्त्यलोके पूर्वकर्मनिरूपं सुखासुखमनुभवन्तो जनास्तु मामेव सर्वस्य

कारणं मत्वा यथा कामं प्रार्थयन्ति दूषयन्ति च ।

V. Mo. p. 34

Harinī. Though she is shown here as the personification of an abstract quality, there is no lack of such women in society, and it is a known fact that the story of Harinī and Rādhā is no rare incident in the modern society. In the present days, when the girls are not fully educated, they are victims to the evils of little knowledge. Their lack of correct understanding and right perception, and also their lack of trust in their own elders and well-wishers, lead them into many pitfalls, which their inexperienced eyes are not able to see before hand. The simple and trusting ones are always led easily by the clever, tempting, glamorous society-women, who make it a point to enjoy life as much as they can, and like the fox who cuts his tail, wish to cause the fall of the innocent ones also. Our poet here, is actually holding up the evils of society, which are spreading rapidly due to the western influence, though completely alien to our soil, in order to sound a warning note to those who would care to listen. "As you sow, so you reap", is the maxim that he wishes to nail down into the growing hearts of the young generation through the examples of Prabhākara and Harinī. Harinī's life and experience can be examples to the present society, specially to the women who are misled unknowingly or deliberately as the case may be. The author does not leave anything for conjecture. He clearly makes the statement to support the saying, "Character is destiny." He says through Yama, "The one who does not fall a victim to either temptation or desire, alone is to be congratulated."¹ Discretion is the final refuge for all, man or woman, learned or ignorant.

This play can be easily taken to be an allegorical one, but, it is not so. Though abstract qualities such as *Moha*

1. यमः—खलानां खलत्वं सतां चापि सत्त्वं दरीदृश्यते येन लोके प्रवृद्धम् ।
युवाभ्यामनाकृष्टचेताः स्वतन्त्रो निजानन्दशान्तिं लभेतैव धन्यः ॥
V. Ma. VII. p. 35

and *Lobha* are personified, it reflects many social truths. The dialogues throw light on true social pictures, showing clearly what is happening in society during this period of social, political and religious upheaval.

Parivartanam by Kapiladeva Dvivedī, is another modern play in which the evils of society are shown up and also some remedies suggested. The intention of the author is clearly stated at the very outset by the Sutrādharma, who says, "We have to act the play called *Parivartanam* which reflects the times."¹ Śāntā and Snehalatā are the only female characters. Śāntā is the wife and Snehalatā is the daughter of the man Śaṅkara. It mirrors the plight of a father who has a daughter to be given in marriage and who is not wealthy enough to pay the bridegroom, even in these so called civilized days. The miseries caused by the dowry-system are clearly shown here.

Snehalatā is a good looking and well-educated girl, with all good qualities. She is well trained in the household duties also. Still, the father has to sell his house to pay the young man, who will marry his daughter only if a few thousands are given to him to buy a car. The worst part of the matter is that the boy himself is putting forward the condition, though of course the father is standing by. When Śaṅkara's friend Mādhavya asks, "What right have you to demand money from the bride's father, when your own father cannot afford it?" the so-called educated young man shamelessly says, "It is a condition, even as the condition put forward by Janaka to break the bow."²

The ridiculousness of the whole situation is brought out by the author, who makes the boy talk of conditions for

1. समयप्रतिबिम्बि परिवर्तनं नाम नाटकमभिनेतव्यम् ।

Pa. Va. Introduction p. 1

2. नास्ति कश्चन अधिकारः । किन्तु पण एष मम यथा जनकस्य पणः धनुर्भङ्ग इति ।

Pa. Va. I. p. 8

his own marriage and compare it with the condition put forward by the great King Janaka for the marriage of his daughter. There, the man had to prove his *worth*, while here the girl's father has to prove his *wealth*. The condition of society, even at a time when education and culture is supposed to be in the ascendance, in which the value of the girl is measured by her father's wealth, is pictured in all its monstrosity here. Things seem to have come to that stage, when wealth and wealth alone could matter any where and under all circumstances. The most shocking fact is that those who do these things do it in the name of freedom. When the father is asked by Mādhavya, what kind of marriage this was, he answers, "It is the time of freedom."¹ Needless to say that this is a very sad commentary on the modern youth in general, because, the truth, as we know, is often stranger than fiction.

The father, forced by circumstances, sells his house and completes the marriage ceremony. Now, comes another phase of the modern society; the honesty of the officers who are supposed to be the public servants. A slight change in the sale-deed effected by the writer for the sake of the bribe that he got, makes the wife of Śaṅkara a destitute, while Śaṅkara himself is away in search of better fortune. When he comes back and finds out what had happened, nothing can be done to redress his grievance, because, there was no witness or proofs to show that Śaṅkara was cheated by the Śreṣṭhi. Due to lack of proof, he cannot get justice. Here, the author comes out with his suggestion of bringing back the *Panchayat*. When everything seems to be lost, there comes a call from the heavens that the evils, India had been suffering for thousands of years, have to be removed. Accordingly, the President

1. माधव्यः — यज्ञदत्त ! अष्टौ विवाहाः मनुना निर्दिष्टाः । कोऽयं विवाहस्ते
पुत्रेण प्रस्तावितः । किमयमपरः मुद्राविवाहः ।
यज्ञदत्तः — पूर्वमेव मयोक्तं स्वतन्त्रतासमय एषः । Pa. Va. I. p. 8

announces the abolishment of the existing courts and re-establishment of the *Panchayats*, where Śaṅkara gets justice in full. The wise head *Panch* goes to the root of the case, and finds that the *Śreṣṭhī* had bribed the writer to change *Rahita* into *Sahita* and thus taken away even the yard and well that were left out in the sale of the house. It is this change in the method of giving justice, that gave the play its name.

Though a small play, the whole story has a natural appeal, because it is dealing with true and topical problems that worry the common man. It brings before us the result of dowry-system which originally was meant to be a security measure for the woman. It has now become a scourge for the girl and her father. Another point, the author makes clear, is the heartlessness of the money-lender, who is swooping as an eagle to take the fullest advantage of a man who, unfortunately, is forced to borrow from him. The final catastrophe is avoided only by the timely interference of the Father of the Nation, through the words from the air, which gives a touch of superhuman element towards the end of the play. Does the poet mean to show that God and God alone can save the misled people? If so, one has to admit, that he is more than successful in his attempts. But, one cannot help feeling that it would have been better, if the change in the administration of justice was effected in a more natural way. Though, the play ends well, we are left with a feeling of sorrow and depression at the plight of the better-half of the world inspite of the achievements in the modern era. This play can well be taken as an attempt to bring home to the youth, who are still closing their eyes, the reality of the situation specially, that of women.

Apart from the above mentioned plays, there are smaller ones—one-act plays, dialogues and such others in Sanskrit. Radio-plays, and adaptations of bigger plays also are many which have come into existence to suit the times.

As everybody knows, this is the atomic age, and everyone seems to be wanting every thing to be atomic, that is to say, every one wants every thing to be done in atomic haste with atomic power and perhaps in atomic shape also. All seem to be flying forward with neck-breaking hurry to some unknown destination. The events some times, seem to remind one of the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*, where all beings are seen going post-haste to enter into the mouth of the Lord in the *Viśvarūpa*.¹ In this flight, nobody seems to have time enough to stop and think for a moment. So, even art and literature have to be flying in order to cope with the madly flying world. The short stories, short poems, sonnets and short plays are all proofs of such demands in all places and all languages. It is gratifying to see that the Sanskrit authors have risen to the occasion, as could be seen from the Radio-play called *Kṛṣakāṇam Nāgpaśa*, the farce called *Vidhiviparyāsa*, and the collection of *Thirteen dialogues* and other works.

The *Vidhiviparyāsa*, a social play by Śrī Jivannyāya Tīrtha Bhattācārya, is a farce in which the Hindu Code Bill is held up to ridicule. The author says in his preface, "The present Hindu Code Bill is an abuse of Hindu ideology and is divorced from the natural course of Hindu culture and civilization, which always aim at purity of blood and formation of man in the real sense of the term. If the so-called progress or modernism is dragged further, what absurd and ridiculous state of things would appear in the eye of poetic imagination has been depicted in this farce."²

The story is imaginary and deals with the changing of sex by operation and also the fight for equality between man

1. यथा प्रदीप्तं ज्वलनं पतंगाः विशन्ति नाशाय समृद्धवेगाः ।

तथैव नाशाय विशन्ति लोकास्तवापि वक्त्राणि समृद्धवेगाः ॥

Bh. G. XI. 29

2. विधिविपर्यासम् । Preface, p. 2

and woman. The main woman character is Jambālājini Rāmāmbā Saraswatī, a prominent social worker who propagates the changing of woman to man. Many ridiculous situations are conceived and the height of nonsense is pictured, resulting in impossible conditions. The play is meant to show that man and woman have their own respective places in society, and it is ridiculous and disastrous to try to go against nature. Some questions raised here are, why should woman conceive children? Why not man do it? Further, why should either take this responsibility? Why not science invent some other means to create babies? A suggestion is given that all the women should join together and refuse to conceive children. Then the Creator will have to find some way to continue the universe going.¹ Another suggestion is to make eunuchs fertile. With the successful attempt for this, the play comes to an end.

As a farce, it is very interesting. Putting up a show of foolish revelry, the author is trying to inject some wisdom into the body of the fast deteriorating society which is really suffering from infection from the undigested western ideas that had been blindly swallowed. The funny situations visualized by the author, are eye-openers to the chaotic conditions that are existent in the present age. True, this cannot be helped in a transition period, but at the same time, such timely warnings, as those sounded in this play and also the one that we studied just before, are extremely useful as guides and helpers to those who are groping in the dark and believe themselves to be fully in the daylight.

The *Kṛṣakaṇam Nāgapāṣa* is another social play dealing with the miseries of the *Zamindari* system and the

1. विनोदसुन्दरः—किं सृष्टिरक्षायां प्रतिभूरेका नारीजातिः ? नारीणान्तु भवतु ततो मुक्तिः ; तासामैकमत्येन सनिर्बन्धं कृते गर्भरोधे विधातुरासनं चलिष्यति । विधिर्नैव सृष्टिलोपभयाद् विज्ञानविदां मनसि किमपि कौशलं प्रेषयिष्यते ।

relief the farmers got by the abolition of the same.

This is the story of Rāmū Chaudharī, a farmer. Due to the natural and climatic conditions beyond human control the crops were ruined and the farmers lost all they had. But, the servants of the landlord demanded the usual taxes and other dues. The typical example of this general fate is shown in the experiences of Rāmū Chaudharī who is rendered homeless and penniless. His only son dies of starvation. The farmers join together and go to Mahātmā Gāndhī to tell him their plight. Their grievances are redressed by the skilful management of the Home Minister, Vallabhbhai Patel, and all ends well. This has only one female character, the wife of Rāmū Chaudharī and even she plays no important part in the development of the plot. Lālmaṇī is the wife of the leading character of the play and the mother of Hariā who dies of starvation. The few sentences that she speaks at the very beginning of the play, when she hears about the miseries they have to face, are typical of the Indian woman in her natural simplicity. She says, "What has to be, shall be. No misery is lessened by worrying about it. So, get up, and come. Wash your hands and feet and take a little butter-milk."¹ That is her philosophy. Whether literate or illiterate, rich or poor, this attitude of reconciliation to fate and implicit faith in God had been the guiding star for the real Indian woman, all through the ages, through thick and thin, weal or woe. Lālmaṇī, though seen only for a few seconds, shows herself to be the one support of her husband in the worst of times.

All times—at the height of her glory in the Vedic times, down through the epic ages, till the last phase of the worst period, in the 17th and 18th centuries, woman has been

1. लालमणी—यत् किञ्चित् ललाटपट्टे लिखितमस्ति तत् भविष्यत्येव ।

चिन्तया दुःखं नालपी भविष्यति नाम । चलतु उत्तिष्ठतु ।

हस्तपादं प्रक्षाल्य दुग्धमिलितां तक्नीं गलादधः श्रवतारयतु ।

Kr. N. P. I. p. 2.

clinging on to the same philosophy of life. She could take the ups and downs of life with the same contentment and fill the life of not only her man, but the whole nation with hope in despair, and teach sacrifice in egoism. But, ever since she came into contact with the West, and saw individualism in full play with the glamour of the materialistic pleasures, a change began to set in. The result, as we experience, is not very encouraging.

The natural phenomena of mother-hood gives the woman the top-most position in the social ladder, whether she or anybody else wants it or not. Hence, it is obvious that by necessity, woman has to be above all petty feelings, lower emotions and demeaning actions. The height of self-sacrifice, unfailing love, constant alertness to give help when needed, a firm belief in the might of right and unflinching courage of her convictions are the qualities that are indispensable in the woman who is the mother of the future nation. The plays we studied hitherto, have shown us that inspite of adverse circumstances, Indian woman was able to hold her own till late in the present century. Social history with all its woeful tales about woman, still would corroborate the above conclusion. But, today, when woman thinks that she is getting better treatment and is coming back to her own, the situation seems to be a bit disturbing. The proof to support this statement can perhaps be found in the book, *Samvādamālā*, written by Shri Ratna Pārikhi.

The *Samvādamālā* is a collection of thirteen dialogues in Sanskrit. These cannot be counted as plays, though they can go on the stage as interesting items of dramatic representations for fun. There are some dramatic situations occurring in a few of these conversations. As is stated in the blessings by Śrī Hazarī Prasad Dvivedi, it is very useful for the students to practice Sanskrit conversation.¹ These

1. संस्कृत, विद्यार्थियों के वार्तालाप के लिए तो बहुत उपयोगी है।

dialogues are interesting as well as instructive. They are all humorous and represent some side of the everyday life of the people in general. The very first dialogue is a page from the daily life of Jayadeva and Padmāvati, a couple belonging to the Indian middle class. The ordinary happenings in life such as buying bread and butter, reading the newspaper, going to the office, and listening to the Radio, are represented in this. Reading through the conversations, one seems to be going through or witnessing the daily routine of life only. Apart from the fact that many new Sanskrit equivalents to English words in daily use are available in these,¹ we get pictures of many interesting little episodes also. The way in which Jayadeva convinces his wife Padmāvati that the song from the *Gītagovinda* of the ancient poet Jayadeva is written by himself² is interesting. Though Padmāvati is supposed to be an educated girl, and has heard about Manu in her own way, she still does not know anything about Jayadeva kavi. Her husband, taking advantage of her ignorance, is making capital out of it.

The second dialogue is the picture of another type of family-life, where the husband is mad after music while the wife's interest is only in the kitchen. She is concerned only with the daily routine, and takes pride in her skill in household matters. It is still an example of the happy life resulting from mutual adjustments. There are a few others also, which represent the happenings in the ordinary modern Indian families, thus proving that the true portraits are much more interesting than imaginary ones. But, in the same collection, there are some other dialogues which may or may not be true to life, but definitely unsuitable to be put into the

1. अङ्गारशकटी—अंगीठी । चीनमृत्थालिका—चीनी तश्तरी । कामरूपिका
कषायः—चाय । कषायधानी—चायदानी । पुरोडाशः—पावरोटी ।
करपत्रिताः—कटे हुए ।

Sa. M. I. p. 8

2. Sa. M. I. p. 13

hands of the students as the author desires to do. For example, the twelfth and thirteenth dialogues would have been better avoided than included in this collection, which would certainly find its way into the hands of adolescent youngsters. It is true, facts have to be faced and evils can be avoided only by exposing them. But, the depiction of such incidents on the stage, definitely have two sides, and one has to remember that self-indulgence is more alluring and easy than self-control. The character of Mandāramālā as portrayed in the last dialogue finds no justification except as a picture of happenings in the present society which attracted the author adversely. The part Samavartikā, the wife, plays in encouraging this undesirable love, between her husband and another married woman, the music teacher of her own children, is unnatural, to say the least.

At a time when the country is struggling to steer ahead, while purity of heart and firmness of character are the utmost necessities to lead it on to its destiny, and when character and behaviour of women are at stake due to the peculiar conditions of our society, all literary and artistic attempts should be beyond the possibility of criticism or shadow of corruption. One has always to remember that these have greater appeal to the hearts of people in general. Sanskrit literature, which has a firm hold on the hearts of all Indians, even those who do not have much knowledge of the language, cannot afford to stoop to depict the wrong side of life however much that may be the reflection of the reality. This language has its higher status and noble position that the authors can never be too careful about what they give to the people. They have a greater responsibility as the custodians of the ancient culture, and to represent the baser side of woman does not behove well on their part. The dire need of the day being women, pure, firm and self-controlled as Sītā, Damayantī and Draupadī, it does not become the Sanskrit dramatists to depict such incidents even with the idea

of holding them up to ridicule.

There are a few dialogues in the same collection which represent the conditions of the government-offices, exposing the many shortcomings, and others that invite readers to share the many humorous and tragi-comic situations arising in the ordinary course of events. But as women characters do not find a place here, these dialogues do not call for much of our attention.

Thus, we have come to the last Sanskrit play known to us. But attempts on this side are continuing. Considering the influence of Sanskrit language and literature on the various modern Indian languages, it may not be out of place here if we try to have a bird's eye view of that influence, if any, on the female characters in dramas written in those languages.

CHAPTER VIII

THE INFLUENCE OF SANSKRIT DRAMAS OVER THE WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE DRAMAS OF THE MODERN INDIAN LANGUAGES

In the course of our study hitherto, we have seen that from the beginning the women were playing a losing game and it was really the story of the slow but steady deterioration in their condition that has been portrayed, bit by bit, in almost all the dramas up till the modern age—the latter half of the nineteenth century, to be precise. This deterioration has been more marked from the time of Bhavabhūti, and by the time of Jayadeva, the whole arena seems to have become stagnant. From about this time, a kind of lifelessness seems to have set in.

The plays themselves seem to have deteriorated into mere toys to please childish minds, and they ceased to attract much attention, as stage achievements. Allegorical and devotional dramas seem to have become the fashion of the day, and in those, the women characters are as lifeless as any other. Thus, we come down to the latter half of the nineteenth century. And here, we have noticed a change in the depiction of characters. Once more the value of women as the companion and helper seems to have been felt by the people. The works of Yājñika, Kālipāda Tarkācārya, Pañcānana Tarkaratnācārya and others began to bring up the individuality of women to the forefront. The new wave of awakening, in the social and political field that engulfed the length and breadth of India, gave a fresh and redeeming

outlook on life for the poets. We have seen how this affected the depiction of women characters in the Sanskrit plays written during this period. *Samyogitā* of the *Samyogitā-Parinaya*, the queen and her friend Subalā in *Amaramangalam*, are refreshing deviations from the old portrayals of women as the objects of sensual pleasures or decorated puppets who are put in the show-case to be admired, flattered and forgotten. These later characters seem to have life in them, which radiates light and life into the characters surrounding them also. Once again, we seem to be breathing fresh air which gives life and strength to humanity.

As we have already noticed, from the latter half of the eighteenth century, the outlook of life was fast changing. This being recent history, the social, religious and political condition of the people is well-known to us. The advent of foreigners into the country, the western education and the close contact with the western literature, began to show the way of new possibilities for Indian writers. Since Sanskrit had ceased to be the spoken language, the various modern Indian languages were fast developing. At the same time, the re-discovery of Sanskrit language and literature by the western scholars and the recognition of its superiority by them, opened another chapter in the history of Sanskrit dramas also. As a result, many Sanskrit plays depicting contemporary life and incidents came to be written, some of which we have already studied. But, it was not possible to satisfy the demand of the ordinary level of people by these, for the very fact that Sanskrit ceased to be understood by the people in general. The various dialects were fast developing into full-fledged languages, throughout the length and breadth of the country, and so also was their literature. In this development Sanskrit played an important part. Since the detailed examination of the dramas in the various Indian languages, does not lie within the scope of our study here, the intention is only to have a bird's eye view of some

languages as far as possible. Since the north and south of India have a few differences to show, it is proposed here to take up Malayalam, one of the four main south Indian languages, and Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati and Marathi, the four of the main north-Indian languages, which have been very greatly influenced by the Sanskrit literature as a whole.

Kerala, the small province in the south-west corner of India, whose language is Malayalam, has been the seat of Sanskrit learning from very early days. There was a time in the history of the Malayalam literature when Sanskrit formed the life, flesh and blood and even its bones. The more Sanskritised his works were the better the poet was considered, even though the ordinary spoken language had not anything much to do with Sanskrit. Although the drama, as it is, came into existence in Malayalam only in the nineteenth century, the dramatic art was there in the various theatrical performances which were prevalent in Kerala in the seventh and eighth centuries A. D. The *Pāṭhakam*, *Cākyār Kūttu*, and the *Kathakali* are such performances which show the influence of Sanskrit dramas over them to a very great extent. The *Pāṭhakam* and *Kūttu* are very much similar to the epic recitations of the earliest days, and these were always attached to the temples. As the *Sūta* is the person who is responsible for narrating the story of the epics to the sages who are anxious to hear, the particular community called the *Cākyārs* were responsible for these epic recitations in the Kerala temples. While the *Pāṭhakam* was more or less in the form of mono acting, with recitation and explanation done by the *Cākyār* alone, the *Kūttu* and *Kuṭiyāttam* which are the more interesting varieties of the theatricals existent at that time, allowed the entrance of two more characters—one a female, and the other, the *Vidūṣaka*, a male. The main elements of the dramatic art, as described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* namely, song, dance, conversation and mimicry are all present in these perfor-

mances. The more interesting point to note here is that many of the Sanskrit dramas, such as *Abhiṣekanāṭaka*, *Abhi-jñānaśakuntalam*, *Āścaryacūdāmaṇi* and others were taken up to be used for such performances by the *Cākyars*.

While discussing the authenticity of the thirteen plays attributed to Bhāsa, we have already noticed that, the six plays based on the story of the *Mahābhārata* looked more like different scenes separated from a whole, and adjusted with a beginning and an end to suit the requirements of a shorter period. The practice of taking up one play and extending it into many days, act by act, is a practice which is existent up to this day, in Kerala, where the *Kuṭiyāttam* is still performed. And, for this purpose, only Sanskrit dramas were used. Even later on, when people began to be partial to the vernacular, it is the translations of those very dramas that came to be acted. Thus we see that the influence of the Sanskrit drama as a whole over these kinds of performances can never be over estimated. At the same time, one has to remember, it is the language and not so much the characterisation or the development of the story that was influenced. This is so with the female characters because, the main personages on the stage used to be only the hero and his friend, and only very seldom, the occasion for the heroine to be present arose. Thus, in the earlier days, up to the middle of the nineteenth century, the dramas as such did not find a place in the Malayalam literature.

But, due to the new contacts with the foreign countries, even as all other Indian languages, Malayalam also had its own development on the literary side. For the first time, in the history of this literature, in the nineteenth century, a full fledged Sanskrit drama was translated into Malayalam and that was Kālidāsa's *Abhi-jñānaśakuntalam*. After this, one by one, all the famous Sanskrit plays were translated into Malayalam. On the model of these works original plays also began to be written. The nearest contact to the Tamil

literature had also its influence on the Malayalam theatre. Coming into existence of musical dramas in the Tamil style was the result. But, all these remained only as literary riches and could not have any other interest for society in general. The growing contact with the English language and literature, widened the outlook of the authors and their imagination soared high. They saw the possibilities of the realistic pictures depicting the contemporary life and society in comparison with the depiction of the characters who belonged to the far off past. So, when the talents developed and originality began to have its full play, the plays that came into existence in the Malayalam literature were far different from the earlier ones which actually led the way to the new era.

Though in the beginning Malayalam had drawn on Sanskrit and Tamil dramas for translation and imitation, it grew out of their control very soon and cut out a new path for its own progress. Neither the artificial characterization nor the mixed-up prose, verse and musical conversations seemed to be in place, where the natural course of events expressed by simple, apt and significant expressions and actions should hold the interest and attention of the audience. So, these elements, obviously superfluous as they were, were easily left behind, and prose dramas—*Gadya Nāṭakas*—came to be the order of the day.

The vast differences between the ideas and ideals that ruled the people of Kerala and those swaying over the rest of India, must have been the main reason for this obvious difference. The first original play written in Malayalam had the fast changing conditions of the society as its theme. The matriarchal system, with all its good and evil points as existed in Kerala, had given a peculiar position to women there, though they were not completely untouched by the prevailing conditions in the other parts of the country. The women there, except the Nambudiri caste, had never known

seclusion or undue restrictions, though the reasonable social laws and rules were observed. Hence, in the new era, when English education and western ideas began to have their undue and undesirable influences on the people in general, the women also fell open preys to them. This, and the other changing conditions of the society gave inspiration to many young writers who found a new scope in the newly found arena of dramas. These plays, written with a particular purpose by the authors had the terribly pathetic truths of life pictured in them. These writers did not cater to the pleasure-seeking patrons, as their fore-runners did, but were bent upon exposing the evils of society, that were eating up its body and soul incessantly. The rules and regulations of Dramaturgy could not control them, nor did they follow any trodden path. Realism and natural character development with the essential emotional appeal, guided these authors. The women characters held their ground in good and evil equally. Thus, the female characters as found in the Sanskrit plays, seem to have had actually no influence on those depicted in the modern Malayalam plays, who are mostly drawn from the contemporary realistic life. The environments, manners and customs, ideas and ideals, being so much different, these dramas, though giving instruction combined with enjoyment, while representing the contemporary life, some times even in its naked reality, fulfils the requirements of the *Fifth Veda* as described by Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra*. But, they are very different from the *Rūpakas* and *Uparūpakas*, we have studied on the Sanskrit stage. It is specially to be noticed here, that the difference in the depiction of the female characters in these dramas is very marked. We find in these plays no influence whatever of the women characters, we have hitherto studied in the various Sanskrit plays from the earliest times up to this day.

But, this same thing cannot be said about the dramas

written in the languages belonging to the north of the Vindhya. It is a well-known fact that the general development on the social, political and religious sides has been almost simultaneous in the various provinces of India, in spite of the geographical and consequently natural differences of the people and their character. The advent of the Western powers into our country, and the contact with their culture and literature, created a new era in which most of the modern Indian languages began their growth in all their various branches. But, everyone of the northern languages had its basic development from the same basis, the unfailing fountain of the Sanskrit language and literature, drawing its food and nourishment mostly from the epics.

One of the languages which took lead in its literary growth is the Bengali, which by its natural artistic and emotional gifts, soon acquired its rightful place in the forefront. The Bengali stage soon came into prominence with the help of the great talented dramatists such as Girish Chandra Ghosh, Dvijendralal Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and others. Of course, the beginning was the Sanskrit dramas translated into Bengali. But it is the original works, that really showed the changing times. The original genius sought their scope in the depiction of the same characters of the ancient literature, in their own way to suit the ideas and ideals of their own age. As our subject here calls for only the female characters of the Sanskrit plays, it is neither necessary nor possible to deal with all the plays or playwrights of any modern Indian language as a whole. Enough to say that though the sources are the same, and the characters also are the same, comparisons and contrasts are equally present in almost every step. For example, we will here take up only one of the plays of Dvijendralal Roy, which depicts the self same character, which we have met with in quite a number of Sanskrit plays, from the times of the earliest poet Bhāsa.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki has served as a source-book for most of the dramatists in Sanskrit. Sītā has been a favourite heroine with them, and we have met her as a bride, as a wife and also as an unfortunate exile in the wilderness. It is significant to note, that in the later period, specially in the modern age, it is this last phase of her life that has attracted the attention and encouraged the imagination of the dramatists. The influence of the earlier writers Bhavabhūti and Dīṅnāga, whose works we have already studied, and also that of Vālmīki, is well traceable in the work of the modern Bengali Dramatist, The same simple, noble-hearted, chaste, loving and obedient Sītā, who holds the name and fame of her husband most dear to her heart, is pictured by Dvijendralal Roy in his drama called *Sītā*. When we read through this play, we find, that it is the same ideal-couple "Rāma and Sītā", portrayed by Bhāsa, who are really one soul in two bodies, that present themselves before our minds, eyes. In the *Uttara Kāṇḍa* of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Sītā is banished under the pretext of fulfilling her desire to see hermitages once again. The same idea is kept up by almost all the later writers, poets as well as dramatists. But, our modern author, does not seem to be able to reconcile with the idea of this deceit on the part of the ideal king and ideal man, Rāma. He could not, perhaps, bear to have such falsehood come between the two incorruptable and identical hearts. It was neither possible nor probable that even for the sake of the performance of duty, falsehood should help.

Another point, this modern genius could not tolerate, was the calm and cool acceptance of that unjust verdict of Rāma by everyone else in the family. Every one of the Sanskrit writers except Bhavabhūti, could visualize the silent obedience of everyone without even a word of protest. Even Bhavabhūti, who saw and dared to openly declare the injustice of King Rāma by trying to rectify the same by the attempted reunion of the two, makes the mothers of Rāma

and Arundhatī show their protest by keeping away from Ayodhyā, and meet Rāma only at the last moment to make him accept his mistake by duly taking back Sītā. But, our present author is not satisfied with this passive and negative protest. Neither could he see the possibility of a reunion of the couple, after such a separation. The denouement shown by Vālmīki and accepted by Kālidāsa, alone seems to be the correct and probable thing under the circumstances. Hence, the whole story had to be re-cast while the main incidents remained the same. The whole picture, from beginning to end had to be different, if it has to be true to the real character of Rāma as well as Sītā. The question asked by Sītā¹ when she heard about her banishment and the whole trend of thought expressed by Kālidāsa and earlier by Vālmīki find their echo in this work of the modern age. Rāma himself cannot listen to the reports brought by Durmukha, with equanimity. He is shaken to the roots of his tranquility and courage. He is angry that Durmukha could dare to repeat such a thing about Sītā. He begs the messenger to tell him that it was all a mistake. Only when he is reminded by Durmukha himself that he had said only what he was forced to say, that Rāma realizes the situation. It needs all the power of Guru Vasiṣṭha to make him decide on the banishment of Sītā. But that is not all. Bharata, the most beloved brother and devoted follower of Rāma readily leaves Ayodhyā and Rāma for ever. He would rather go away himself than stand by and see such an injustice done. Śāntā, the sister, and Mother Kauśalyā would not allow Rāma to do such a thing at any cost. Rāma, finally had to yield to the supplication of his mother and decide to withdraw the order of banishment he pronounced on his own second self.

1. वाच्यस्त्वया मद्बचनात्स राजा बह्वी विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम् ।
मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासीः श्रुतस्य किं तत्सदृशं कुलस्य ॥

Here is a struggle, a struggle between truth and duty. Rāma could not choose. The Indian womanhood is shown here as rising up to the occasion. When everything seemed to be darkness for Rāma, when all seemed to be deserting him and condemning him, there comes the divinity to redeem him, to lead him from Untruth to Truth, from Darkness to Light, from Death of Infamy to the Immortality of Glory ! Sītā had heard everything, and she steps forward to save the prestige of the family, the purity of the kingly fame and the truthfulness of Rāma's words. "Be happy, my Lord", she says, "You should not be sad or sorry because of me. I shall spread my heart on your path for you to tread on, so that your feet may be saved from thorns. I leave the palace of my own free will. Only one request to you—Smile once; let me see a smile on your face before I go !"¹ She left the palace, and Rāma's duty as a king was fulfilled. The idea suggested in the *Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa* in the message for Rāma sent through Lakṣmaṇa² at the banishment seems to have been followed up and made clearer by this author in this act of Sītā.

It is sixteen or seventeen years after this incident that we meet Sītā next. Then she is the mother of the twin boys. As the mother, she is very proud of her sons. Still, a great

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1. "तुम अपने मन से सब चिन्ता दूर करो; मैं स्वयं यह अयोध्यापुरी छोड़ कर वन को जाऊंगी ।...उठो नाथ, मेरे मन में अगर कोई अभिलाषा है तो यही कि तुम्हारे मुख में मनोहर हंसी की रेखा देख कर जाऊँ..." ।

Sītā by D. L. Roy, Act II, Hindi Translation, p. 39

2. अहं त्यक्ता च ते वीर अयशोभीरुणा वने ।

यच्च ते वचनीयं स्यादपवादः समुत्थितः ॥

मया च परिहर्तव्यं त्वं हि मे परमागतिः ।

वक्तव्यश्चैव नृपतिर्धर्मेण सुसमाहितः ॥

यथा भ्रातृषु वर्तथास्तथा पौरेषु नित्यदा ।

परमोद्दोष धर्मस्ते तस्मात्कीर्तिरनुत्तमा ॥ V. R. VII. 48. 13-15

change has come over her. The halo of self-sacrifice and self-abandonment which she felt surrounding her, as described in the previous scene of the play, is seen no more. She feels ashamed to reveal her identity to her own children. She considers herself the most unfortunate woman in the world. Lava, the younger of the twins, challenges the right of Rāma to consider himself the greatest of all Kṣatriyas and, in the battle, he defeats and wounds Śatrughna. Only then, forced by circumstances, Sītā tells the children the truth of their relationship to the great king.

By slight touches here and there, the author has shown a marked difference in the character of these two boys. We have hitherto seen these two brothers very much alike and devoted to each other wherever we have met them, whether portrayed by Vālmīki, Bhavabhūti or Dīgnāga. This is the first time that a difference in character, conduct and mood is made noticeable between the two. And, there seems to be a purpose contemplated by the author in this. Kuśa seems to be caring more for the worldly glory, status and position. Lava, on the other hand, is more heroic, idealistic, innocent, simple and straight-forward. Kuśa seems to be always playing for safety, while Lava prefers to be in the open and always on the offensive. The real difference is seen more plainly in the way the two boys react to the news about their parentage. Kuśa is ashamed to know that Sītā is the banished wife of Rāma, and he is only too glad to accept, and be accepted by his father. But Lava is more proud of his mother, and the father who would not do his duty to his devoted wife, is in his eyes, despicable. Even at the order of his Guru, the holy Vālmīki, he would not bow down before such a man. When Sītā is miserable at the attitude of Kuśa towards her, Lava takes the dust of her feet and, realising her greatness, proclaims to the world thus—"My mother, why don't you speak to me? I am not ashamed of you! Till now your place was in my heart; but

from now onwards, it is even over my head. You are my venerable, worthy of worship divine mother."¹ His devotion and loyalty to his mother is such that, when the great king of Ayodhyā comes to take them back, Lava does not hesitate to tell him in plain words what he really thinks of him and his action. And Rāma openly admits that of his two sons Lava is greater and nobler. Through these two, the author seems to be bringing before the audience the two trends of thought that would always exist in this world about the whole episode and, specially, the banishment of Sītā by Rāma.

Though the ideal upheld by the ancient traditions is saturated in the character of Sītā, the author does not seem to see the possibility of a reunion between Rāma and Sītā. The last vow which she took to prove her unblemished purity was the only one that any woman could possibly take under those intriguing circumstances. Vālmiki had made it very clear, and Kālidāsa followed very closely in the same foot-steps. We have already seen the attempts made by the later writers such as, Bhavabhūti and Dīgnāga, to show the possibility of a reunion; and also how unconvincing those attempts were. Now, Dwijendralal Roy sounds a different note. He neither makes it necessary for Sītā to take any vow to prove her purity, nor makes Rāma directly responsible for her banishment. Still, he knows only too well that, as long as the cause of Sītā's banishment was the fickle public opinion, a reunion without the possibility of a repetition of the scandals was impossible. He also realizes the significance of the last vow of Sītā. At the same time,

1. लव—माता, उठो उठो ! मैं तुम्हारा पुत्र लव तुम्हें पुकार रहा हूँ ।
मैंने तो तुमसे घृणा नहीं की । फिर क्यों मुझसे नहीं बोलती हो ?
माता, पहले मैं तुमको हृदय के भीतर रखता था, आज से तुम्हारा
स्थान मेरे सिर पर होगा । जननी, तुम मेरे लिए सदा आराध-
नीया देवी हो—अपने चरणों की रज मुझे दो ।

Sita by D. L. Roy, Act V. Hindi Translation, p. 76

the ideal of womanhood he visualises is the height of self-abnegation, which does not allow any room for thoughts of the self. All the women characters depicted by this author, in this very play or others, show more or less the same selfless and dedicated way of life. The way in which Sītā accepted the verdict of her Lord at the beginning is just the thing one expects from such a woman. Rāma is absolved of all responsibilities for that happening. And finally, when Guru Vasiṣṭha is convinced by the arguments of sage Vālmīki and Rāma is free to accept Sītā back, it is naturally expected that every thing would end well in a happy reunion. But, considering every thing, this could not happen. If we remember the exclamation of Bharata which he gave vent to before leaving Rāma, we are able to know what the opinion of the author is. Bharata says—"If this is what you are going to do to Sītā, then who will show respect to pure and good women? If you are going to treat your wife who is goodness and purity personified, thus; then the hearts of innocent women will become the toys of heartless men. The misery of the heart of women will become a thing to be scorned at by men. Throughout the land, the husband will feel no responsibility towards the wife."¹ This would be the consequence if the woman swallowed the insults, forgot and forgave all the wrongs done to her. Still, it is the nature of woman. But, the nature, who gave this unfathomable love and patience to woman, cannot stand by and see her submitted to such a terrible fate. The meeting of Rāma and Sītā was achieved. Mother Earth, at

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1. महाराज, अगर सती साध्वी स्त्री के साथ आप ऐसा व्यवहार करेंगे तो फिर नारी का सम्मान कौन करेगा ? दुर्बल सहनशील रमणी का हृदय तो फिर जगत में घर-घर पुरुष की क्रीड़ा की सामग्री समझा जाएगा । स्त्री के हृदय की पीड़ा पति के उपहास की चीज बन जायेगी । भारत के, हर देश के हर घर में अबला के प्रति पति का कर्तव्य शिथिल हो जायेगा ।

Sita by D. L. Roy, Act II. Hindi Translation, p. 33

the opportune moment, opened her bosom and received her daughter who had endured misery all her life. The ideal of womanhood remained true to her character, and the respect and honour due to her was vindicated fully and safe-guarded by Mother Earth. This is what was intended by the author in thus changing the course of incidents, though keeping the ideals of the ancients true to the spirit.

The other female characters in this drama are—Kauśalyā, Māṇḍavī, Urmilā, Śrutakīrtī and also Vāsantī, the friend of Sītā in the hermitage of Vālmīki. Enough to say that the same soft, sweet, loving, understanding disposition of women is kept up by the author in keeping with the age, experience and position of the various characters. The influence of the ideals held up by the ancient sages and poets in the Epics as well as in the earlier plays are clearly visible in a modified form, to suit the revival of humanity, in all these characters.

Dwijendralal Roy has dealt with many other themes in his various dramas—themes both from the Epics and from the pages of the mediaeval history. Of the characters that are taken from the Epics, the influence of authors like Vālmīki and Kālidāsa is markedly noticeable. In the other plays which portray characters from more recent history, the ideals are adorable and more idealistic than realistic.

The Marathi stage also has quite a good and enviable literature to its credit, which grew up in the same period and more or less in the same way. Balwant Panduranga Kirloskar is regarded as "the father of Marathi drama." In the seventies and eighties of the last century, he translated the *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* into Marathi, which was very much acclaimed during his life-time, as a very sweet and faithful work. But his second play, the *Saubhadra*, dealing with the *Mahabharata* story of carrying away of Subhadrā by Arjuna and their marriage, is considered to be his best. The Subhadrā seen in this play seems to possess

all the daring qualities of the Maratha women of mediaeval history. When Rukmīṇī tries to dissuade her from rushing headlong towards Arjuna, the girl retorts, "My sister-in-law, your brother had planned to give you in marriage to Śiśupāla. Was he wanting in good looks, valour or wealth that you surreptitiously sent a letter through a Brāhmaṇa and managed to marry Kṛṣṇa?"¹ In his *Rāmarājyaviyoga*, he seems to have brought down Kaikeyī to the level of a low woman, who calls her husband, "weakling, impotent and bully;" whereas Mantharā is portrayed as all-powerful and Vasiṣṭha is made to say of her to Sumanta, "Well, it is truly said that God is the enemy of the weak. I tell you, if she takes upon her mind, she will force you also to confine yourself to your house."²

With very powerful dramas—mythological as well as historical and social—Marathi had a very well developed stage also, which existed much before Kirloskar wrote his *Saubhadra*. The drama, therefore, soon took a leap into the modern requirements of the society, of which women formed a very important part. Naturally, then, women were depicted in the Marathi dramas more in keeping with the modern psychology than in the pure idealistic or mythological way. The Maharāṣṭrian touch of dash and daring among the women characters is nowhere missed. Among the playwrights who have depicted their women characters most remarkably, are—Ram Ganesh Cadkari, Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar and Bhargavaram Vithal (Mama) Varerkar. It is clear from their dramas that though historical and social

1. वहिनी, तुझ्या भावानें तुला शिशुपाल राजा ला देऊं केली होती, तो काय रूपानें, पराक्रमानें किंवा ऐश्वर्या ने कमी होता, म्हणून तूं चौरून ब्राह्मणा बरोबर पत्र पाठवून कृष्णाला वरलेस ? A. M. V. S. p. 71
2. अहो, "देवो दुर्बल घातकः" ही म्हण खरी आहे, तुम्हाला सांगून ठेवितो, तिनें जर मनात आणिलें तर तुम्हाला देखील तों घरीं बसायला लावील । A. M. V. S. p. 74

themes are appealing to the masses and the classes alike, the stories from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* have not forfeited their interest at all. An example is found in the story of Sītā dramatised by Mama Varerkar under the title, *Bhūmikanyā Sītā*. His depiction of Kṛṣṇa's marriage with Rukmiṇī under the title, *Dwārakā chā rājā*, is also popular.

In the *Bhūmikanyā Sītā*, which is one of the most modern plays of the Indian languages, the women characters depicted are Sītā and Urmilā, the main characters, and Kuśikā and Vāsantī, the two servant-women of the palace. The story of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the theme. The main incidents described are the same. The characterisation shows a definite departure from all other plays, we have hitherto studied—whether Sanskrit or of the modern Indian languages. We have seen Urmilā in some of the Sanskrit plays, but nowhere we have met with such a plain-spoken and courageous Urmilā, as in this creation of Mama Varerkar. The same is true with the Sītā found here. The very introduction of Urmilā in this part of the story is something new. Up till now, we have found her mentioned only at the time of marriage in Mithilā. Of course, she was introduced in the later part of the story by Dvijendralal Roy for the first time, but that was just once in the beginning of the play, immediately after the coronation of Rāma at Ayodhyā. In this connection, it is well to remember that no mention of Urmilā is found anywhere in the *Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, except in the *Balakāṇḍa*, which Camil Bulke regards as a later interpolation.¹ In support of this, there is a mention of Lakṣmaṇa in the *Aranyakāṇḍa* where he is said to be unmarried.² Rāma tells Śurpaṇakhā that a man needed a woman companion and he had got Sītā; but he was looking for some one to keep company with Lakṣmaṇa, and fortunately she

1. C. Bulke : Rāma-Kathā, Pp. 120-123

2. अकृतदार । V. R. III. 18. 3

had come.¹ This also leads to the conclusion that Urmilā is a later invention in the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* itself. After Dwijendralal Roy, who practically re-discovered Urmilā, there have of course been some poets, mainly Maithilisharan Gupta and Balkrishna Sharma 'Navin', who have sung of Urmilā in their great poems—the *Sāketa* and the *Urmilā* respectively. But, the Urmilā pictured before us by Mama Varerkar is a completely new character. This Urmilā is a courageous, reasoning type of woman, who knows to listen and also to ask questions intelligently. Apart from the name there seems to be nothing in her which we can possibly trace to the ancient literature or even to Sanskrit dramas.

As for Sītā, the idea of self-respect is at least referred to in the Bengali play, we have studied. But this Sītā of Mama Varerkar is so very different from the soft and mild Sītā of D. L. Roy. We find in the Sītā and Urmilā of the Marathi play, a peculiar tendency "to have it out" with anybody who would dare to challenge them. Mama has completely changed the tone of the story we have been hearing. Nowhere in this play do we find the partially apologetic tone with which a woman is accompanied elsewhere. Śambūka episode also has been made a point at issue between Rāma and Sītā. It is brought to the notice of Sītā that she is the daughter of Mother Earth and Śambūka, being a Śūdra, is also the son of Mother Earth; and hence her brother. This conviction along with the feeling that injustice is being done to him makes Sītā plead with vehemence for his sake. She reminds Rāma that the latter is a disciple of Viśvāmitra, the

1. कृतदारोऽस्मि भवति भार्ययं दयिता मम ।

तद्विधानां तु नारीणां सुदुःखा ससप्तता ॥

अनुजस्त्वेष मे भ्राता शीलवान्प्रियदर्शनः ।

श्रीमानकृतदारश्च लक्ष्मणो नाम वीर्यवान् ॥

अपूर्वी भार्यया चार्थी तरुणः प्रियदर्शनः ।

अनुरूपश्च ते भर्ता रूपस्यास्य भविष्यति ॥

V. R. III. 18. 2-4

supporter of the low and the outcaste, and is also the husband of Sītā, the daughter of Mother Earth.¹ She tells finally that injustice should not be done to Śambūka. Only when Rāma asks, "Is this your order?" she remembers the unusually strong way in which she was talking to her husband, and humbly adds—"This is my appeal to you. To order I have no right."²

The way in which the scandal about Sītā spread in the kingdom and is brought to the notice of Rāma, and the part Vasiṣṭha is made to play in the banishment of Sītā are very significant. This is nothing newly invented. The idea exists in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Rāma is told by his spies that the people were saying—"The king's acceptance of Sītā makes matters difficult for us in the future. We may have to bear such conduct on the part of our wives also."³ This idea is made clearer by the scene of Vijaya and Vāsantī, the *Dhobi* and his wife. And Rāma is made to declare in plain words that he is only the servant of the Brāhmaṇas and the sages and he could only do what they ask him to do. The influence of the family preceptor, Vasiṣṭha, is shown throughout the play. Though Rāma wishes to banish Sītā, he has not the courage to tell her so, and hence he decides to send her away on the pretext of fulfilling her own wishes. Every body who knows about it objects, except Lakṣmaṇa, the one staunch follower of Rāma. Urmilā is bitter—bitter against

1. राम—ब्रह्मवृन्दा चा आज्ञाधारक सेवक आहे हा राम ।

सीता—विश्वामित्राचा शिष्य आहे राम ! भूमिकन्येचा पती आहे हा राम !

Bh. K. S. II. p. 33

2. राम—ही आज्ञा आहे का तुम्ही ?

सीता—हैं मागणं आहे माझं । आज्ञा करायचा मला अधिकार नाही ।

Bh. K. S. II. p. 33

3. अस्माकमपि दारेषु सहनीयं भविष्यति ।

यथा हि कुरुते राजा प्रजास्तमनुवर्तते ॥

V. R. VII. 43. 19

Rāma, against the people of Ayodhyā, against the whole set-up of the society. She could never forget the fact that she was not even once remembered by any body after she was left by Lakṣmaṇa, who followed Rāma forgetting every thing and everybody for the sake of that beloved and worshipped elder brother. She had been left to suffering of separation all her life.

Rāma follows Vasiṣṭha and Lakṣmaṇa obeys Rāma. No body else counted anywhere. This social set-up and the evils that were fast engulfing the society are seen clearly by those who suffered from them—the women and the low class people. Both are shown by Mama as standing up against them, though in vain. Urmilā pleads with Lakṣmaṇa not to do the cruel act, which he is forced to do in order to obey his elder brother. She pleads with the king, Rāma, not to force his devoted brother to do it, because he would never disobey the orders. She does not do this for her sake. Her words here are very significant. She says—"I have kept my mouth shut all my life. But today I am allowing myself to speak. I know I am guilty of arguing with elders and thus insulting them. But I am doing this for the welfare of the whole womankind. Any man who wishes to abandon his wife for fear of public scandals, will quote Rāma of the Raghu-dynasty and will abandon his innocent wife tomorrow. That is why I have to become so shameless."¹

But these pleadings, arguments and open accusations

1. जन्मभर तोंड बन्द वरून राहिलेली मी, आज तोंड उघडलं माझं। वडिलांचा अपमान केला हा अपराध होतो आहे माझा, हें मला कलत; पण स्त्री जातीच्या कल्याणावर लक्ष ठेवूनच मी हा अपराध करते आहे। लोकापवादासाठीं निर्दोष स्त्रीचा त्याग करणारा प्रत्येक पुरुष उदया रघुकुलोत्पन्न शोमाचं नांव सांगेल अणू आपल्या निर्दोष पत्नीचा त्याग करील, म्हणूनच आज मला असं निर्लज्ज व्हावं लागतंय।

could not have any effect then, because it was a society where the Brāhmaṇas, the elders and the husbands were the rulers and, good or bad, their word had to be the law. Lakṣmaṇa, the husband, who has never—even for once—been known to have remembered his duty towards his wife, orders Urmilā to stay where she is and to keep quiet till he left the palace with Sītā, and demands obedience on the right of being her husband! He is satisfied by just apologising to her laconically that it was not his lot ever to make her happy.

Urmilā seems to be stronger and more courageous, perhaps because she has nothing to gain personally. It is she who arranges that Vāsantī, the *Dhobi* woman, become the companion and helper of Sītā in the wilderness.

In the last scene, when Sītā is brought to the sacrificial hall and Rāma insists that she should once more give proof of her purity, we see in her a strange combination of love and obedience to her husband and the eagerness to keep up the self-respect and dignity of womanhood. The arguments put up by Sītā and Urmilā there represent quite a new trend of thought which was never heard of before. The idea suggested by Bharata in the play of D. L. Roy is brought forth more clearly and in more powerful words by Urmilā and Sītā at every stage in this drama of Mama Varerkar.

In *Kundamālā*, we see Rāma insisting on the people to be satisfied about the purity of Sītā. This is mentioned by Vālmiki¹ as well as Kālidāsa² in their respective works. And

1. यदि शुद्ध समाचारा यदि वा वीतकल्मषा ।

करोत्विहात्मनः शुद्धिमनुमान्य महामुनिम् ॥

V. R. VII. 95. 4

शुद्धायां जगतो मध्ये वैदेह्यां प्रीतिरस्तु मे ।

सीताशपथसम्भ्रान्ताः सर्वे एव समागतः ॥

V. R. VII. 97. 10

2. तात शुद्धा समक्षं नः स्तुषा ते जातवेदसि ।

दौरात्म्याद्रक्षसस्तां तु नात्रत्याः श्रद्धघुः प्रजाः ॥

[Contd. on next page]

both have shown Sītā entering the *Yajñasālā* with the dignity of a *Yoginī*,¹ and taking the vow that left everyone, who dared to suspect her, astonished and bitten by repentance and sorrow. This incident has been taken up by this author and the full significance of the same is brought out clearly in the last scene of the play. In the *Kundamālā* of Diṅnāga, we have seen how Rāma was not willing to take Vālmiki at his word for the purity of Sītā, but wanted her to undergo another ordeal. He was ready to allow Vālmiki to go away in anger. The same attitude is seen here also, which is stranger and worse. In spite of Vālmiki's explanations and assurances and the arguments of Sītā and Urmilā, Rāma does not have the courage to do what he knows to be right. The one sentence he is repeating as an excuse for all that he does is : "For the sake of pleasing the people."² And he even stoops so low as to ask : "Is Sītā pure by herself, or she has become absolved of all stains due to her living in your *Aśrama* ?"³ This question is the last limit !—this adding of insult to injury by Rāma !! Only Urmilā, the woman who had suffering and suffering alone to her share all her life,

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- ताः स्वचारित्रमुद्दिश्य प्रत्याययतु मैथिली ।
 ततः पुत्रवतीमेनां प्रतिपत्स्ये त्वदाज्ञया ॥ R. V. XV. 72-73
1. अ. काषायपरिवीतेन स्वपदार्पितचक्षुषा ।
 अन्वमीयत शुद्धेति शान्तेन वपुषैव सा ॥ R. V. XV. 77
- आ. सर्वान्समागतान्दृष्ट्वा सीता काषायवासिनी ।
 अब्रवीत्प्राञ्जलिर्विक्रमधोदृष्टिरवाङ्मुखी ॥ V. R. VII. 97
2. राम—लोकाराधनेसाठी ! दया, माया, सौख्य, शांतीची मला पर्वा वाटत नाही ह्या लोकाराधनेपुढं, तिथं सीतेची काय कथा ?
 Bh. K. S. II. p. 50
3. राम—पण आधीं लोकांचं समाधान झालं पाहिजे । सीता स्वतः सिद्ध शुद्धच आहे ना भगवन् ? कीं आपल्या पवित्र आश्रमांत वास्तव्या केल्यामुलं ती निर्दोष झाली आहे ?
 Bh. K. IV. p. 87

could stand up and take Rāma to task for this, as he deserved ! But all in vain ! Rāma is only a party to the strict rules laid down by his preceptor, who is a representative of the law-givers. He insists, even as a helpless child, that Sītā should avow to the purity of her character. Then Sītā takes the vow—that vow which takes her beyond the reach of everything and everybody. That famous vow of Sītā, taken thousands of years ago, still echoes and re-echoes from the *Yajñasāla* of Ayodhyā as the bugle of victory of the chaste and pure woman.

The vow is the same as found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*,¹ and then in the *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa.² But Sītā here does not just take the vow and disappear. She makes it quite clear why she takes the vow. She tells plainly that this world has failed to appreciate righteousness and purity and that she cannot live and submit to mere man's rule. She does not approve of the *Rāma-Rājya*. Good and prosperity can come only when it is the rule of *Sītā and Rāma*, as it was in the forest during the period of their exile.³ At last, Mother

1. यथाहं राघवादन्यं मनसापि न चिन्तये ।

तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमर्हति ॥

मनसा कर्मणा वाचा यथा रामं समर्चये ।

तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमर्हति ॥

यथैतत्सत्यमुक्तं मे वेद्मि रामात्परं न च ।

तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमर्हति ॥ V. R. VII. 79. 14-16

2. वाङ्मनः कर्मभिः पत्यौ व्यभिचारो यथा न मे ।

तथा विश्वंभरे देवि मामन्तर्धातुमर्हसि ॥

R. V. XV. 81

3. सीता—रामराज्याची प्रतिष्ठा ! रामराज्याच्या प्रतिष्ठेपेक्षांही स्त्रीजातीची प्रतिष्ठा अधिक महत्वाची वाटते मला ! रामराज्य ? कसलं हें रामराज्य ! रामराज्य होतं तें त्या वनवासातं वैभवाची भलती प्रतिष्ठा नव्हती त्या वेलीं अधिकाराचा बडिवार नव्हतां त्या वनवासांत तें नुसतं रामराज्य नव्हतं, तें सीतारामांचं राज्य
[Contd. on next page]

Earth obeyed her noble and majestic daughter and took her away beyond the reach of insults and praises.

Certain aspects of Sītā's character in this play are very much indicative of the trends of the times. She espouses the cause of Śambūka, a Śūdra, calling him her brother, because he was a tiller, a son of the Mother Earth, who also was the mother of Sītā. Men and women are known in history and literature to have been kind and fair to the low and down-trodden, but here in Mama's play, Sītā's treatment of

[Contd.]

होतं म्हणूनच ऋषीमुनींची तपश्चर्या निर्विघ्न झाली, तें सीतारामांचं राज्य म्हणूनच दैत्यांचा संहार झाला, दुर्जनांचा नाश होऊन सज्जनांची प्रतिष्ठा प्रस्थापित झाली रावणाचं साम्राज्य जाऊन विभीषण लंकचा राजा झाला, पृथ्वी निष्कलंक झालीति सीतारामांचं राज्य होतं म्हणून ह्या निष्कलंक सीतेला पुन्हा पुन्हा दिव्य करण्याचा प्रसंग येतोय हें रामराज्य आहे म्हणून—हें नरराज्य आहे म्हणून ! स्त्रीजातीची ही मानखंडना ही भूमिकन्या केव्हांही सहन करणार नाहीं राजा रामचंद्रा, मी दिव्य करतें आहे, पण तें दिव्य माझ्या शुद्धीच्या प्रस्थापनेसाठीं नव्हे ! मी दिव्य करतें आहे तें स्त्रीजातीच्या मानखंडनेचा विध्वंस करण्यासाठीं मला राज्य पाहिजे आहे तें सीतारामांचं मला जगायचं आहे तें सीतारामांच्या राज्यांत पतितपावन म्हणून ज्याचा जयजयकार होतो आहे तो राम नव्हे, तो सीताराम आहे, त्या सीतारामाच्या राज्याच्या छत्राशिवाय हा जीव वरून ठेवणं अशक्य होतंय मला म्हणून मी दिव्य करतें आहे, रघुकुलोत्पन्न रामाशिवाय मी कुठल्याही पुरुषाचं चित्तनसुद्धां केल नसेल, कायेनं, वाचेनं, आणि मनानं जर मी रामाचीच आराधना केली असेल, तर ही विष्णुपत्नी—ही माझी माता मात—ही भूमाता आपल्या ह्या निष्कलंक कन्येला ह्या क्षणालाच ठाम देईल भूमींतून आलेला हा आत्मा ह्या भूमीतच विराम पावेल जय सीताराम ! Bh. K. S. IV. Pp. 89-90

the Śūdra is, apart from its great human values, full of social sagacity in terms of the age. The author, perhaps, thought it fit to give the solution of the *Harijan* problem of our day a religeo-political touch and, in doing so, not only tried to facilitate the solution, but also added another feather to the crown of the ideal woman, Sītā. The problem assumes much greater proportions when viewed from the angle of Brāhmaṇa supremacy and its heritage (also, by the way, the burning problems in Mahārāṣṭra, as also in some other parts of the country), both symbolised in Vasiṣṭha in this play. And no less a personality than Sītā was needed to fight the tyrannical aspect of it, as she did. Vāsantī, the *Dhobi* woman, who was evidently wronged by her husband, is chosen by prudent Urmilā to bear company to Sītā in her exile,¹ showing thereby not only her solicitudes for all the oppressed, but also a great sense of judgement with regard to giving a true and loyal company to Sītā. Who but an oppressed woman in a scandal-mongering society could be trusted to be faithful to one who was similarly oppressed?

The tyrannical aspect of the Brāhmaṇa supremacy is also brought out by making Vālmiki remember and remark that he was born a Śūdra.²

All these taken together, point to the fact of the Brāhmaṇa supremacy, tyrannical on one hand, and the sense of social revolt surging through the minds of the oppressed and the down-trodden on the other. And Sītā, herself the oppressed, is made to espouse the cause of the oppressed, which she does in all the dignity of a great woman; and thus gives support to the resurgent psychology of Liberty, Equality

1. लक्ष्मण—फार उत्तम भालं आतां असं कर, उर्मिलेनं तुला पाठवलं
असं आधीं सांगूं नकोस ।

Bh. K. S. III. p. 55

2. वाल्मीकि—सारे ऋषीमुनी मला दस्यू म्हणतात विश्वामित्र मुनींचं व्रत
मीही आचरलं, अनार्यांचा पाठीराखा भालों, म्हणून मलाच अनार्य म्हणूं
लागले सारे लोक—दस्यू म्हणूं लागले ।

Bh. K. S. III. p. 71

and Fraternity in the sense India has understood them through her philosophy. It is an ennobling experience to realize in this play that Sītā, fighting against the tyranny of many kinds, is yet the same sweet, noble, ideal woman in whom we find a combination of virtues, rare but true.

Thus, we see Mama Varerkar, though writing in the 20th century, is really following closely the story as found in the Rāmāyaṇa, the first poem ever written in Sanskrit. It is the same ideas and ideals as upheld first by Vālmīki and then by Kālidāsa that he tries to elaborate upon and explain. Actually, the depiction of Sītā by the various authors from time to time has quite a lot to enlighten the student about the march of Indian womanhood through the ages. The same story has been retold again and again and the same character has been drawn in various ways to suit the times, convictions and beliefs and the tastes of the probable audience. We have been noticing this throughout, at every step, and at this landmark we have come to a point where the very significant words of Vālmīki are plainly explained, without reserve. Neither Vālmīki nor Kālidāsa could visualize Sītā taking a vow of her own purity for a second time. For the later authors, this was not quite impossible. But, obviously, that was a time when woman had to submit and then to succumb to the tyranny of man, his selfishness, and also to that of the religious preceptors. When the days changed, the picture of Sītā also began to change. Gradual change was already coming over the portrayal of this character during the very short interval between the creation of D. L. Roy and that by Mama Varerkar. The idea that woman was being treated with injustice was slowly gaining ground then, but woman herself was not yet willing to challenge it.

Now the time seems to have come when Sītā and Urmilā both find it necessary to stand up against any injustice and expose the guilty, however, great and mighty they may be. Dwijendralal Roy made Bharata and Lava condemn

Rāma's treatment of Sītā, while Sītā herself accepted the will of her beloved husband without question. Mama, a few years later, saw that the conditions are such when women themselves can defend their rights. At the same time, it is well to remember that the ideas expressed by Bharata and Lava in the earlier play and by Urmilā and Sītā in the later one, are not new. These existed in the works of the earlier poets, as we have already seen. Thus, the influence of the earlier authors is traceable over the characters in the modern plays to a great extent. If we examine the other plays in Marathī, written during this period, we will be able to see this truth more and more.

In Gujarati, the *Śarvilaka* is a recent drama, written by Shri Rasiklal Parikh. In it the story of *Mṛchhakatika* is recast to suit the modern age. Instead of Cārudatta, the leader of action, here is Śarvilaka, thus rendering the political revolution the main theme, while the love affair of Vasantasenā and Cārudatta is pushed to the background. The women characters portrayed are the same. Vasantasenā, Madānikā, Dhūtā and Radānikā are all there. Śveta-padmā, the wife of king Pālaka and Kāmalatā, another courtesan are the new characters introduced by the author.

A close study of this play reveals that keeping the characteristics as found in the original play, the author has changed the nature of the whole story to suit the particular purpose with which he was writing. While India was fighting for her independence and every Indian was filled with the fire of spirit, freedom it was only natural that the creative genius found outlet to suit the demands of the times. The literature that grew up during the past half century, in all the languages of India, shows the same common characteristics combined with the revolutionary ideas that swept throughout the country, both in the political and social fields. The swelling waves of freedom in all spheres necessitated reforms and the literature began to reflect these

aspirations of the people in one way or the other. The *Śarvilaka* is a good example of the old stories remodelled on the new pattern. It is to be remembered that this is a time that has brought women to the fore-front in all spheres of life, at home and in the world outside. The various problems facing the society in connection with women, who were leaving behind the old traditions and were hastening forward to take their proper place by the side of men, supplied the dramatists enough material to work upon. In the *Mṛchhakaṭika* of Śudraka, Vasantasenā had nothing to do with the political issues. She was there only as the beloved of Cārudatta. Madanikā and the episode of stealing the ornaments by Śarvilaka were also introduced there only to enhance the character of the hero and the heroine by showing the honesty of one and the generosity and the sense of humour of the other. But here, not only Vasantasenā and Madanikā but another courtesan, Kāmalatā, are all used as helpers in achieving the success of the contemplated revolution. Śarvilaka says plainly at one place that courtesans are of great help in conducting revolutions.¹

Every one of these characters has a peculiarity of her own. But in general they all show a kind of re-awakening to their duties as well as to their rights. The women, whether they belong to noble families, to the ordinary ones or to the courtesan class, seem to have a dignity and self-respect, which are not very common in the Sanskrit plays of the preceding age.

Gujarati literature is not known for its dramas. After the well-known dramatist Chandravadan Mehta wrote his *Akho*, *Aggari*, *Narmad*, *Naga Babā* etc., which were very popular on the stage, no playwright worth the name has risen in Gujarat. But some progress has been seen in the field of one-act plays. Munshi, Batubhai Umarwadia and Jayanti

1. 'विप्लव कार्यमां वारांगना बहु उपकारका' ।

Dalal are known for their one-act plays.

Not much information is added to what we know from the study of the Gujarati dramas that are available.

Hindi stage was never much developed in the known history. Apart from the cinema, which seems to have given the final blow to the prospects of developing the Hindi stage, the *Rāmalīlā*, the *Kṛṣṇalīlā* and the *Nautankī* are still the most popular plays in the rural, Hindi speaking North. Theatre halls were not wanting in the cities and towns of the Hindi speaking regions, as elsewhere all over India, but they were mostly monopolised by Parsi Theatre Companies or by amateurs. The plays written for them had no literary merits and they either catered to the lower instincts of the drama-loving people or indulged in effectless sermonising on moral or religious planes.

But Hindi literature is not entirely devoid of its dramatic constituent. The dramatic literature, as usual, began with the translations of Sanskrit plays, and the first play so translated is known to be the *Prabodha-candrodaya* rendered into Hindi (Brajbhasha) by Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jaipur around 1760 A. D. Similarly, the first original play is said to be the *Ānanda Raghunandana* written by the Maharaja of Rewa some time about 1800 A. D. But among the earliest plays available to us, the most important from the literary point of view is the translation of the *Abhijñāna-śākuntalam* by Raja Lakṣmaṇa Singh around 1860. But this play, though highly appreciated for its literary merits, has nothing to offer so far as our present studies are concerned. Bharatendu Harishchandra's *Satya Hariścandra* is the next. This is an adaptation of the *Caṇḍakaūsikam* of Kshemiśvara and has nothing new in it. He also translated half-a-dozen other Sanskrit plays, the most important among them being the translation of the *Ratnāvalī*, which we have already studied. Many other authors followed suit and wrote original plays also, but none of them commanded uni-

versal respect until Jayashankar Prasad came on the field in our own times and gave high class plays of the most refined taste.

Govind Vallabh Pant, Harikrishna Premi, Lakshmi Narayan Mishra, Udaya Shankar Bhatt, Seth Govinddas, Upendranath Ashk, Prithwinath Sharma and Vrindavan Lal Varma are the other main playwrights of Hindi who have written during and after the twenties of this century. Their plays include all kinds—historical, social, political, purely psychological and mythological. But the influence of the Sanskrit dramas does not seem to be marked on their characters. While some of these plays like the *Varamala* of Govind Vallabh Pant are known for their cultural and aesthetic values, most of them are influenced by the political and national trends of the times.

As already indicated, some stories belonging to the Epics have been chosen for dramatisation by the modern Hindi authors also. But the female characters depicted herein do not seem to have any thing much in common with the same characters described in the ancient books or the Sanskrit dramas. These women generally show either the most idealistic nature, presenting before the readers a super-human level, or they behave in such a way as to be realistic enough to remind us of the virtues and vices of our contemporary society and life.

The truth of the statements, *Change is life* and *Life is change*, is being proved in our country in this century more than at any other time. The poetic imagination and dramatic genius find their scope at almost every turn and they do not have far to seek an example for almost any type. Hence the present writers can easily afford to forget the lifeless, patternised, artificial characters of the Sanskrit dramas of the recent centuries. The ancient writers like Kālidāsa and Bhāsa do catch their eyes for a flash, but the variety of real life that they see before them allows no time

for them to stop and look behind the curtains of the past. That is why we find almost everywhere the haste to catch up with the present atmosphere.

The atomic age has only increased the pace of life. Everybody seems to be running to make up for the lost time. Hence, even literature has to be spicy and condensed, so as to fit in with the general haste. This necessity itself may be one reason for the changed nature of the characters we see on the modern Indian stage, irrespective of province or language. This applies specially to the women characters presented in every one of the modern Indian language also.

CHAPTER IX

MARCH OF WOMEN THROUGH AGES

In the foregoing pages we have attempted a study of the women characters depicted in the Sanskrit dramas available to us from the earliest times to the present day. In the course of that study, we have met with celestial and terrestrial women, divine and semi-divine damsels, princesses and hermit-girls, women of noble descent and also courtesans. We were able to examine the conception of women in their various capacities as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers by the different poets. We have met with women of the same or different status depicted by the same poet, and also the same character depicted by the different poets belonging to different periods. Thus, we have had an opportunity of studying the women characters according to the various poets and also the conditions and times in which they wrote.

Though this treatise can in no way claim to be an exhaustive study of all the Sanskrit plays, it is fairly representative as far as the women characters are concerned. In the course of study, we were also able to see incidentally the growth, decay and revival of the Sanskrit drama itself. Along with this, we have seen the slow deterioration of women, till it reached the lowest ebb, stagnation for a period and then the renaissance in the present times.

It is an accepted fact that, "Drama is not the mere representation of life, but the presentation of an outlook on

life, the presentation of life in the light of that outlook.”¹ According to known facts, the evolutionary, revolutionary and political changes that overtook Indian society had been very varied and remarkably interesting. Actually, the history of social life, from the earliest days known to men, should have been the background of our study. As Carlyle says, “In any measure, to understand poetry, to estimate its worth and historical meaning, we ask as quite a fundamental enquiry, what the situation was. Thus the history of a nation’s poetry is the essence of its history—political, economic, scientific and religious.”² But, as we do not possess that in any authoritative form about the earlier periods, the only way left to us, was to reconstruct such a history from such literary material, as best as we could, and then study those very literary models in the light of the history thus reconstructed. We have done this with regard to the earliest available Sanskrit dramas up to the time—such recorded history was available, from where onwards we were on surer grounds. Having thus reached the present day, it may not be out of place now to take a bird’s eye view of the march of women through the ages, as far as it could be possibly traced. This can be done more easily, if we are able to see the depiction of the self-same character by the different representative poets belonging to the various ages from the earliest times, up to date. Such a character is available to us in the personality of Sītā, the highest ideal of Indian womanhood, accepted universally and unanimously.

From the very early days, we have seen that the Epics, specially the *Rāmāyana*, have been the source of inspiration to many Sanskrit dramatists. From the time of Bhāsa, up to the modern playwrights, it is mainly the *Rāmāyana* that had provided the themes for them. And so, Sītā, the heroine

1. *Jagirdar* : The Sanskrit Drama, p. 98

2. *Carlyle* : Miscellaneous, Pp. 292-293

of the *Rāmāyana*, around whom the story revolves, is portrayed again and again by all these dramatists according to their own vision and also the outlook of life in their times. Bhāsa depicted Sītā in two of his plays, the *Abhiṣeka* and the *Pratimā*. Kālidāsa has portrayed Sītā according to his own vision in his poem *Raghuvamśa*. Bhavabhūti presented before his audience, two types of women in the two different plays he wrote, based on the Epic. While Bhāsa confined himself to the original story up to the destruction of Rāvaṇa, Bhavabhūti covered even the last portion of the Rāma-story found in the *Uttarkāṇḍa*. Bhāsa was satisfied with dramatising the story as he found in the Epic, but Bhavabhūti did not hesitate to make many drastic changes in the body-plot of the play. The reason for this deliberate deviation from the trodden path must have its own story to tell, as we have already noticed.¹

The *Pratimā* and the *Abhiṣeka*, attributed to Bhāsa, seem to represent women who are breathing in a natural, free and healthy atmosphere. The relationship between man and woman at that time appears to be one of mutual trust and confidence, love and respect. This characteristic of his plays in general seems to be most pronounced in the depiction of Sītā and Rāma. As we have already pointed out,² man and woman seem to enjoy equal status in society, and also have mutual respect and understanding, based on true love. The position of woman in society appears to have been high. But there are indications to show that the duties of the wife were more emphasised than her rights. The position of Sītā, as the eldest sister-in-law to the younger brothers of Rāma, is on a par with the loving mother.³ Through-

1. Chapter IV, Pp. 198-203; 231-236

2. Chapter II. Pp. 29-32

3. रामः—इयं स्वयं गच्छतु मानहेतोर्मतिव भावं तनये निवेश्य ।

तुषारपूर्णोत्पलपत्रनेत्रा हर्षस्निमासारभिवोत्स्रजन्ती ॥

out, she is portrayed as a noble, straight-forward and kind counter-part of the ideal man, Rāma. She is humble and respectful towards her elders, kind and generous towards her dependants, devoted to her husband to the extent of sharing with him even his innermost feelings, firm and courageous in danger—a true and noble woman in every respect. The veil, which later on became the sign of seclusion, seems to have been a token of noble descent when Bhāsa wrote. There seems to be nothing wrong in concluding that women enjoyed a high status in the society during his times.

The next poet who brought Sītā on the stage, is Bhavabhūti. He, within the compass of his *Mahāvīracarita* and *Uttararāmacarita*, narrates the life-story of the noble queen from the time of her marriage up to the last phase. Though a great admirer of his predecessors—Valmiki, Bhāsa and Kālidāsa, he did not hesitate to introduce changes in the course of action, and even to interpret incidents in his own way, disregarding the Epic-traditions as well as the poetic traditions. He went to the extent of making the drastic change, in the story of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, by affecting the reunion of Rāma and Sītā, even after the banishment. The Sītā portrayed by him is very different from the pictures drawn by his predecessors. Besides, it is impossible to miss the difference between the Sītā in the *Mahāvīracarita* and the same character in the latter play by the same author. We have dealt with this difference in detail earlier.¹ Suffice to say here that the heroine of the first play of Bhavabhūti is no credit to any society or nation. The Sītā of the *Uttararāmacarita* on the other hand, is the ideal that the poet wishes to hold up to the society which was obviously fast forgetting the respect and honour due to women, who are the real assets of the nation.

Studying both these plays in comparison with each

1. Chapter VI. Pp. 196-199, 215-218

other, and also trying to gather some facts from the social and political history of the times, the only conclusion one can arrive at is that the condition of women in North India, then, was fast deteriorating, and they had lost their individuality considerably. Presenting women on the stage itself seems to be questionable. The first two plays show women of Āryan descent as true examples to the rule of Manu, namely, "Woman do not deserve any freedom."¹ True, there are women like Śurpanakhā, Lankā, Alakā etc., and also Kāmandakī and her disciples. The possible deductions have been presented at the relevant places.²

The Sita depicted by Bhavabhūti, in the *Uttararāma-carita* is the ideal that he could conceive, under the circumstances in which he found the society striving. In depicting the heroine of his last and best dramatic work, Bhavabhūti showed all his skill and his creative genius. As a true poet, he took lessons from all his predecessors, but at the same time followed up his own imagination in creating the ideal that would perhaps catch the attention of the audience for which he wrote. Only such a woman as the simple, loving and trusting Sītā, who is the real 'Gṛhalakṣmī' (goddess of the hearth) while in the company of her husband, but the personification of agony while separated from him, could command the respect of the society in which Bhavabhūti was living. He was witnessing the downward march of women, which was being encouraged and even organised by the social law-givers. By the bitter statements such as : "In treating of women, even as in treating of the good qualities of literature, people are always evil-minded"³, the portrayal of Rāma and Sītā in the way we have seen in that play, by the

1. न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति ।

Manu. IX. 3

2. Chapter IV, Pp. 198-203

3. यथा स्त्रीणां तथा वाचां साधुत्वे दुर्जनोजनाः ।

U. R. Ch. I. 5

open declaration made through Rāma¹ about the marvellous power of the real love of a wife, in fact by the whole story of the play as he recast it, the poet is actually showing the greatness of women to a society which was causing them to fall to the condition of Sītā and Urmilā as seen in the *Mahāvīracarita*, and also of those ascetic women, found in the *Mālatīmādhava*. Reading between the lines and reconstructing the social conditions as could be seen from the development of the plot and the dialogues, we may correctly conclude that the position of women had already reached a very regrettable stage. The less a woman was seen outside her home, the more she was considered to be good. The veil had already become the necessary equipment, specially for a married woman. It seems to have become the tendency of man to use woman as an object of enjoyment and pleasure. Woman's duty was to look upon him as the meaning and justification of her existence. The well-known saying, "He for God only and she for God in him", seems to have become the rule of the day. The peculiarity of the oriental woman is the special tendency manifested in her nature which makes her always give but never take. She always dared to suffer where men would shrink. These characteristics of women were being used to make her more and more submissive and dependent. We have seen in an earlier chapter, how even at the time of Kālidāsa, this tendency was gathering power, as could be proved by statements made by the various characters at various contexts such as, "*Upapannā hi dāreṣu prabhutā sarvatomukhī*."² (The husband has all-extending authority over his wives). But, at that time, the men seem

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1. अद्वैतं सुखदुःखयोरनुगतं सर्वास्ववस्थासु यद्
 विश्रामो हृदयस्य यत्र जरसा यस्मिन्नहार्यो रसः ।
 कालेनावरणात्ययात्परिणते यत्स्नेहसारे स्थितं
 भद्रं तस्य सुमानुषस्य कथमप्येकं हि तत्प्राप्यते ॥

U. R. Ch. I. 39

2. Ab. Ś. V. 26

to have possessed the sense to see that the power thus sanctioned by the society could be maintained only if they ruled over the heart. Even then, we have seen how the Master-poet did not like those tendencies which were definitely heading the society as a whole towards moral deterioration, and how he painted the ideals of men and women, as he would have them to be—the supplements and complements of each other.¹ He sounded the warning note; but the tide neither turned nor stopped.

This condition of women in society is once more proved in the contrast noticeable in the portrait of Vāsavadattā in the works of Śrī Harṣa and also in the works of the earlier poet Bhāsa. It is so very obvious that no comments are needed as we have already seen in one of the previous chapters. The next notable author who took to portray Sītā, is Śaktibhadra, the author of the *Āścaryacūdāmaṇi*. In this play, Sītā is shown as the personification of modesty, simplicity, humility, and also of self-confidence, courage and firmness. But she seems to be showing the base side of human character also on certain occasions. Though following up the story as found in the *Valmiki Rāmāyana* closely, Śaktibhadra seems to have been influenced by the society of his times. For, in his attempts to picture the ideal wife Mandodarī, whose one aim is to please her husband in spite of all his evil ways, and through the treatment meted out to Sītā in the last act, he seems to be bringing to the forefront the real condition of women in society, without saying anything in so many plain words. The nature and character of woman is denounced wherever the least opportunity arose. The reactionary attitude of Lakṣmaṇa to the circumstances that led to the fire-ordeal of Sītā in this play, in comparison with his attitude as portrayed by all the previous poets, is itself an eye-opener to the pitiable and deteriorated condition of

1. Chapter IV. p. 188

women in the latter age when Śaktibhadra wrote. The feminine character (Strīsvabhāva) is denounced at every opportunity, as something despicable.

Though innumerable plays were written on the basis of the story of Rāma and Sītā, the women characters portrayed in them are few, and also stereotyped, as we have already noticed in the foregoing pages.¹ Between Bhāsa and Bhavabhūti on the one hand and the later writers of Rāma-plays on the other, the difference we find is exactly the deterioration of the dramatic art in Sanskrit literature, and also the deterioration of the condition of women in society. For, these later writers have only narrated the story in a flourishing poetic style, intermingled with scatterings of equally poetic prose conversations. The development of characters and plots does not seem to have attracted their attention very much. And the female characters are either non-existent or if existent, are put there only as puppets to please the eyes of the audience by their appearance. Of the various plays, we have taken the works of Dīgnāga, Murāri, Rājasekhara and Jayadeva, as the important representative works of their respective times. Of these, Dīgnāga alone seems to have taken a fancy to the deplorable fate of Sītā in the last phase of her life. His *Kundamālā* is, to a very great extent, an imitation of the work of Bhavabhūti, less the beautiful combination of the idealistic idealism and realistic realism which the earlier poet alone was capable of. The repetition of the ideas expressed in all the earlier works are found in this play abundantly. But, as we have already seen,² the dignity and high status of woman evinced in the characterization of Sītā by the earlier authors are not found in this play. Dīgnāga, like Bhavabhūti, shows the re-union of Sītā with Rāma even after the undeserved banishment she had to suffer at the hands of her husband. Of course,

1. Chapter V. Pp. 297-299

2. Chapter V. Pp. 300-310

Bhavabhūti showed clearly the anxiety of king Rāma to please his people. But, at the same time, he was careful enough to bring forth the mental condition of the husband, who was being tortured in burning repentance about his own action, the terrible injustice done by himself, towards his wife, whom he worshipped for her purity and nobility. Thus, he contrived the natural denouement, namely the glorious victory of true love, with the help of the divine mothers of the universe—Gaṅgā, Pṛthivī and Arundhatī, who made the fickle-minded people realise their mistakes and repent. The picture of Rāma and Sītā, as drawn by Bhavabhūti in his *Uttararāmacarita* with the emotional background so vividly pictured, and, also, the exquisite psychological harmony created, may help one to get reconciled to the idea of the re-union thus effected, for a moment. The scene in the Janasthāna, in the company of Bhavabhūti, keeps us spell-bound, and makes us agree that, that was the only possible denouement. But, once we come down to the normal worldly atmosphere, there seems to be something wrong somewhere. A question mark remains in our hearts. These people, whose opinions seem to be immensely valuable to king Rāma; these people, who bent their heads down in shame due to the scathing remarks and questions of Arundhatī, Mother Pṛthivī and Devī Gaṅgā, are they really convinced of their mistake once and forever? Are they going to keep their respectful, nay, worshipful attitude towards the noblest of women, forever and anon? We are not sure! The poet himself has reminded us in the beginning of the play that the public is always evil-minded as far as the *Sādhutva* of women as well as literature is concerned.¹ The Later poet Dīgnāga, is still more unconvincing, though he has tried to follow closely the footsteps of the predecessor he admired. The Sītā who weeps and wails pitiably, when left to her fate, who gets frightened at the footsteps of a stranger, and who

1. यथा स्त्रीणां तथावाचां साधुत्वे दुर्जनो जनः ।

U. R. Ch. I. p. 5

without a word, is prepared to take the vow to please the fickle-minded people, seems to be a stranger to us. She does not seem to have anything in common with the noble princess whom we met before, in Mithilā, in Ayodhyā, in the Panchavaṭī, in Lankā, and in the hermitage of Vālmiki at any time. We are left wondering at the re-union of these two new characters which was achieved in such conditions through such ways and means. The acceptance of the banished Sītā, thus forced upon the king Rāma, does not seem to satisfy either of them or anybody else. It seems to be the utter defeat and destruction of the nobility of womanhood. The play that seems to sound a note of happiness, is really putting to shame, Indian womanhood and all that stands for it.

Perhaps, these truths were realized by the later dramatists who took-up the same theme for their works. But, before coming to that, we have to turn to some other poets who portrayed Sītā in their dramas. We have already examined the *Anargharāghava* of Murāri, the *Bālārāmāyaṇa* of Rājaśekhara and also the *Prasannarāghava* of Jayadeva.¹ All these three poets, seem to be following the footsteps of Bhavabhūti's *Mahāvīracarita* to a great extent. In the *Anargharāghava*, only Śurpaṇakhā and Śramaṇā seem to take any active part. Sītā is brought on the stage only in the last act where she is rescued from captivity and taken back to Ayodhyā by Rāma. Of course, the purification by fire-ordeal is plainly made known to the audience, lest they should forget the stigma that could so easily be put on the character of a woman. There is actually nothing to tell us about the real condition of women at the time. Rāma is shown to be very lovingly describing the sights on the way, to Sītā, while they are travelling to Ayodhyā in the *Puṣpaka*. But this does not mean anything, for it looks more like the means used by the poet to show off his own scholarship and

1. Chapter V. Pp. 287-300

command of language, than anything else.

Rājaśekhara, in his *Balarāmāyana*, tries to reconstruct the whole story in his own clever way. He accepts the various recensions of the story as told by all his predecessors and combines them to suit his own purpose of raising the hero and all connected with him, to a divine level. Here, in this play, there are quite a number of women characters, all good, quiet, submissive and obedient to their husbands. Similarly, the picture of Śūrpaṇakhā is also a combination of the pictures painted by Vālmiki and Bhavabhūti. She is an intelligent and efficient officer in the diplomatic corps of Lankā, and works faithfully for the welfare of her country. But, she is also an ordinary woman with likes and dislikes, ruling passions, and enough unscrupulousness when her own desires are thwarted.

Jayadeva in his *Prasannarāghava* once more tells the story in a dramatic form. All these poets seem to have a pattern in treating the various characters, much more so in the case of the women characters. In the *Mahāvīracarita* of Bhavabhūti, we noticed for the first time, the clear contrast between the women of Āryāvarta, and those belonging to the Dravidian families. All the later writers who treated the main part of the story of *Rāmāyana* seem to have kept up this difference. The Sītā portrayed by all these writers shows the same traits. She is simple, obedient, soft-hearted, weak and completely dependent on her husband. The end and aim of the women of her class seem to live like a creeper clinging to the tree, just a shadow without any life of their own. But, the characters belonging to the Dravidian races—Śūrpaṇakhā, Śramaṇā and others—are of a different category altogether. These women have their family-life, emotional-life, and also different individualities of their own, as has been already noticed. That is to say, the trend first brought to light by Bhavabhūti in his first play, and perhaps disliked strongly by his audience, was followed up by the later

writers. It would be interesting to know the reason if we possibly can. Perhaps it may not be very wrong to conclude that, while in the North, which was the birth-place of the *Dharmasūtras*, the *Smṛtis* etc., the women were being pushed down, the South which was kept safely apart from those influences due to geographical, historical and political reasons, had its women continuing more or less in the same old way, enjoying equal rights with the men. It may not be too much to assume that the dramatists, who were catering to the Sanskrit speaking audience, were anxious not to shock the orthodox society of the Āryans by showing their women in a different way from what they wished them to be. But, they did not care if the true condition of the Dravidian women, who never came under the veil, and did not have to suffer seclusion or oppression very much, was shown on the stage; for, that would actually help them to be dumped as *Rākṣasis*—unrefined, uncultured and unscrupulous. The fact that none of these poets ever hesitated to denounce their character and behaviour, only supports our conclusions.

After this period, as we have noticed, a lull seems to have come over the creative genius in dramatic literature. Though plays continued to be written, the characters, specially the women characters, appear to have lost all life and individuality. The play having fallen to the types of lyric poems, it seems futile to look for living characters in them. Only late in the 19th century when things began to change in society, the stage seems to be catching the eye of the people, and consequently encouraging the creative genius of the poets also. But along with the change of times, the poets too seem to have changed their outlook on life. The modern Sanskrit poets, as we have noticed in the foregoing pages,¹ instead of going to Vālmiki or Vyāsa for their themes,

1. Chapter VII.

turned their attention to the pages of history and even to the contemporary happenings in society. In this period, we are forced to approach the modern Indian languages to see the portrait of Sītā according to the present age. But, before actually embarking upon the conclusion of this topic it will be useful to recapitulate the influences which made the modern dramas what they are.

Literature in the modern Indian languages as well as in Sanskrit was greatly influenced by political and social reformers from the later half of the 19th century up till the attainment of independence. After this a new trend seems to be developing. Right from Swami Dayananda and Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Lokamanya Tilak, Shri Arbindo, Shri Rabindra Nath Tagore, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and last, but not the least, Mahatma Gandhi—all have influenced it, the modern Indian dramas being no exception. Gandhiji's impress on literature, as on the life as a whole, being the latest, most powerful and universal, deserves to be recalled with special respect. His was the cause of the Truth, hence it naturally touched all aspects of life, which included, as a major contribution, the regeneration of woman. He said: "Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of things, and not a result only of learning to read and write. By sheer force of vicious custom even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over woman which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Man and woman are equal in status, but are not identical. They are a peerless pair being complementary to one another; each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived, and therefore it follows as a necessary

corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of both."¹ And further, "It (the female sex) is the nobler of the two, for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge. A woman's intuition has often proved truer than Man's arrogant assumption of superior knowledge. There is method in putting Sītā before Rāmā, and Rādhā before Kṛṣṇa."²

These outpourings of the heart of 'the greateat man of our times' are not isolated in time and space. They have always existed in the minds of the noble and the great. But, Mahatma Gandhi followed these up with ceaseless action and inspired many a man to do likewise. The poets and the playwrights were not behind in their response. The result was a new light, a new movement, and a new trend also in literature—to make a special mention of the dramas with which we are here immediately concerned—of the modern Indian languages.

In the modern age, when woman is once more coming to her own, not by oppressive or aggressive means, but through the soft, sure and noble way of love and sacrifice, Sītā, the ideal of Indian womanhood is brought again to the people to be visualised in a new light and to be understood in the correct way. The *Sītā*, by Dvijendralal Roy in Bengali and the *Bhūmikanyā Sītā* by Mama Varerkar in Marathi, are the two plays that give us the opportunity to do this. As has been already noticed,³ the pictures we see in these two plays are very very different from any of the earlier ones we have seen, even as they are different from each other. This may be due to the varying environments in which the poets found themselves; for, while we cannot miss the soft, sweet

1. From a speech at the meeting of Bombay Bhagini Samaj, Feb., 20, 1918
2. The Young India, 15-9-1921
3. Chapter VIII. Pp. 447-450, 456-465

self-abnegating Bengali mother in the *Sītā*, it is impossible not to notice the courageous, self-confident and plainspoken Mahārāṣṭrian heroine in the *Bhūmikanyā*. It is very significant, that exile of *Sītā* by *Rāma*, and not the earlier portion, attracted both these writers. The note struck by the master-poet, *Kālidāsa* about the injustice of *Rāma* evidenced in the exclamation of *Vālmiki*: "I am indeed angry with the elder brother of *Bharata* because of this wrong action towards you,"¹ perhaps, re-echoed from those far off centuries into the seeing brains and feeling hearts of the modern poets, who were witnessing the same injustice of man towards woman in every sphere of life. At the same time, the love, sacrifice, patience and forbearance of the woman in her everyday life which they were experiencing, struck another note in the imagination of the emotional Bengali poet. He visualised the *Sītā* who, inspite of every injustice she suffered, could say, "May you be my husband in all coming rebirths, and may there not be this separation."² He also remembered those mothers-in-law, whom *Sītā* remembered first, in her utmost agony, and indirectly requested for moral support.³ The results are, the *Sītā*, who voluntarily came forward to choose exile for herself to relieve her husband from a difficult situation, and also the *Kauśalyā* who came to king *Rāma* and begged on her bended knees to stop him from the cruel action he was about to take against his innocent wife.

The whole play—*Sītā* by *Dvijendralal Roy*—in fact, is an exposition of the bygone *Brāhmaṇa* supremacy which held

1. त्वां प्रत्यक्स्मात्कलुषप्रवृत्तावस्त्येव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे । R. V. XIV. 73

2. भूयो यथा मे जननान्तरेऽपि त्वमेव भर्ता न च विप्रयोगः ।

R. V. XIV. 66

3. श्वश्रूजनं सर्वमनुक्रमेण विज्ञापय प्रापितमत्प्रणामः ।

प्रजानिषेकं मयि वर्तमानं सूनोरनुष्ठायत चेत्तसेति ॥

R. V. XIV. 60

every thing under its thumb. The scene being Ayodhyā and the times represented those of implicit obedience to the social law-givers, the heart was to be crushed for the so-called duty to rule supreme. Woman the wife, woman the sister, and woman the friend had to bow down to the stern demands of the kingly duty, namely, the dumb obedience to the Brāhmaṇa preceptor. Every time, when a question of right or wrong arose, the only answer that King Rāma could give was, "It is the order of our preceptor, Vasiṣṭha", as though that was the final word that could convert even the wrong actions into right ones. Only at last, when sage Vālmiki himself stood up for the sake of pure love above every thing, and challenged Vasiṣṭha in clear words, that the latter accepted defeat and allowed the unfortunate King to follow his heart's injunctions. Even then, Sītā is not strong enough to stand up for her rights. This Sītā is simple and loving. She is self-sacrifice personified, the very image of love for her children and devotion to her husband. She knows and feels the injustice. But, the self-effacing forbearance is personified in this Sītā, who is portrayed by the masterhand at the beginning of the new awakening of Indian woman. She is the ideal woman of the age which pronounces that "the woman has only one right, one duty—self-sacrifice, self-effacement."¹ And this acceptance raises her above all creation. The misery of such a woman, the poet shows, will arouse even the forces of nature. For, the moment Sītā was accepted back by Rāma, there was an earthquake, and she was engulfed in a divine lustre and was removed beyond the reach of any human hand, thus taken away from all possible insults for ever after. The story told by Vālmiki was retold once more; but in a different manner, with a different emphasis and a different significance.

Closely following the same trend, but in a more

1. 'स्त्री का एक ही अधिकार है, एक ही धर्म : आत्मसमर्पण'—"Didi"

pronounced way, the same story is retold by Mama Varerkar. Sītā is once more brought before us, this time not alone but with her sister Urmilā, a much more wronged woman than herself. The theme and the trends of thoughts expressed are the same, and cover almost the same period. But, this poet does not agree with Bhavabhūti and Dīgnāga, who could envisage the idea of Sītā's re-union with Rāma once again. He saw the impossibility and futility of such a step, considering all the circumstances in which the exile was ordered and also the wisdom of the earlier poets, Vālmiki and Kalidāsa, in leaving it at that. In this play, Sītā and Urmilā show a higher standard of wisdom, self-confidence and also self-respect. Though the incidents and the characters are the same, the results and reactions are not what we have been seeing all through, ever since Kuśa and Lava are supposed to have sung the *Rāmāyaṇa* for the first time. It is only in this drama that the idea, conceived by the first poet in the last vow of Sītā, i.e. the significance of the final proof she gave of her unblemished character, was finally and fully explained by herself and also by Urmilā. This marks the milestone in the upward climb of woman in her march through the ages. From the height at the vedic times, she was slowly climbing down till she reached the lowest level, where the probable fall was arrested, with a jerk.

These two plays, though coming from the master-minds of two important modern Indian languages, are really the landmarks in the destiny of Indian womanhood as a whole.

The various other Sanskrit plays and also the plays written in the modern Indian languages during this period clearly support the conclusions we have arrived at. It is often said that the oriental woman is a slave. This remark only shows the ignorance of the speaker. The fact is only this, that self-assertion is not her quality. A selfish world, taking advantage of this characteristic, paved the way for

her downfall to a great extent. Though the law-givers paid the highest tributes to women as mothers, they restricted women as such, by innumerable rules and laws. The outward conditions also helped in this by making it necessary to protect women who were really the pillars of society. These laws which were meant for protection, themselves narrowed the scope of the development of women, thus defeating the very purpose for which they were created.

These truths about women did not find their way into the dramas, except through casual references and some deliberate statements. There are evidences within the plays to show that generally the education of girls was confined to music, dance and other fine arts, and those who belonged to rich and noble families were no exceptions to this rule. By the time of Bhavabhūti, we see that veil had become the necessary equipment of a married woman. The *Satī* system also seems to have come into vogue as has been already noticed.

We also find that in the later dramas, the women characters presented are lesser in number and so is the case of dramatic effect. The dramas seem to be mere narratives in prose and verse, a kind of long descriptions without any real dramas. Perhaps, the reason is not far to seek. While studying about the origin and development of Sanskrit drama, we have noticed that there were clear proofs to show that women participated freely in the acting and that, without accomplished women, success in the staging of plays was considered impossible, as could be conjectured from the story of the creation of the *apsaras* for representing the *Kaśikī Vṛitti*. In those earlier days, we have also references to dramatic companies of women. Later on, in Bhavabhūti's plays for the first time, we come across the statement about men acting the roles of women, thus indicating the absence of women on the stage in general. This naturally should have become a handicap to the successful depiction of

feminine characters and soft sentiments on the stage. Having to resort to the second best choice, of taking a man with the nearest possible feminine characteristics, should have spoilt the fervour and enthusiasm of the audience as well as the performers. Thus, music and dance which added to the beauty of the ancient performances also slowly died out. It is only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that these characteristics of the Sanskrit theatre, as ordained by Bharata, seem to be coming back once again. This may be considered as the revival of the theatre and plays to a certain extent.

The last half of the 19th century was a time of renaissance in many ways, and it was the era of the beginning of heroism and patriotism in India. The need of these ideals was felt by scholars in all literature. The result of this was shown in Sanskrit language, by scholars like Pancaratna Tarkācārya, Yājñika and others, whom we have already referred to in the previous chapter. Plays began to be written with themes hitherto untouched. Sāvitri, Damayanti and such other bold women from the epics attracted the attention of the new artists; and they dared to present the heroines in a better light than the weak, and frail puppets that were portrayed in the medieval days.

Slowly, with the growing patriotic spirit and desire for freedom among the people, the value and importance of women in society began to be realised also. Padmini of Chittore, Rani Durgavati of Indore, Lakshmibai of Jhānsi and such others gave inspiration to the poets. The political and social conditions gave opportunities for such poets who wrote the *Samyogitāpariṇayam*, *Amaramaṅgalam* and other similar plays in Sanskrit. True, that these Sanskrit plays are not as popular as they deserve to be. But the reason for this is the rapid development of the various regional languages and also the displacement of Sanskrit as a spoken language by these. Still, we are able to see that, there is a definite change of

mind and attitude on the part of the scholars of Sanskrit also. From here onwards we see that the women characters portrayed are individuals with life and character, real human-beings with the strength and weaknesses. These new characteristics are more and more pronounced in the plays written in the various modern Indian languages.

The women characters taken even from the traditional lines, seem to have regained their status and position in the society, irrespective of the fact whether the plays are written in Sanskrit or in one of the spoken languages, as is proved by the various plays we have studied in the previous chapter. Though the character and characteristics are the same, we find in them a more pronounced individuality, courage and self-respect, which was hitherto unknown in the women represented on the Sanskrit stage. The weeping, whining weak creature seem to have been replaced by soft but firm, gentle but dignified, loving and living characters, ennobled by self-confidence, and a charming and self-reliant disposition. The *Sītā* of Mama Varerkar, the queen of Chittore, the *Sāvitri*, the *Sītālakṣmī*, and the *Umminitankā* of the different Malayalam plays we have examined, prove this irrefutably. The potentialities of woman as the nation-builder came to be more and more emphasized in the modern Indian plays, whereas the earliest writers had depicted her as the supplement and complement of man.

While examining the Sanskrit plays, with special reference to the women characters, we have had an opportunity to study the difference or otherwise between the theory as laid down by the law-givers and the actual practice as could be verified from the plays themselves. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata lays down rules for all possible and probable contingencies on the theatre and also for the staging of the dramas. In this connection, details as to the use of music and dance in the play are given with great care. Then the warning note also is sounded that these are to be introduced

within the play always keeping in mind the propriety of occasion, person, place and other things.¹ Though this is so, we do not have much music or dance in any plays available to us before Kālidāsa. The performance of the *Pūrvāranga* allows the elaborate use of music and dance, but the *Mālavikāgnimitra* is the only play available to us in which the dance and music help towards the development of the plot.² In the *Vikramorvaśīya*, we have a slight indication of dance and music in the fourth act where the king is wandering from place to place, in search of Urvaśī, his beloved. In the *Abhijñānaśākuntala* also we have music within the bodyplot of the play, where Hamsapadikā is heard singing in the interlude before the fifth act of the play.³ Similarly, in the interlude after the sixth act, the maids-in-waiting at the palace are singing and dancing to celebrate the spring festival when they are chided by the gardener.⁴ In the *Mṛchha kaṭika* of Śūdraka, mention is made of a music performance, but it is not actually presented on the stage. Here, we also hear the poet ridiculing the man who sings, even as the woman who repeats the Vedic mantras.⁵ All these are proofs to show that dance and music were part and parcel of dramatic performances, and mostly they were the monopoly of women, though men also had their own place in the dance, the Tāṇḍava type specially being meant for them. Still, we do not find any other Sanskrit plays having actually included

1. Nāṭyaśāstra : Chapter 34

2. Mālavikāgnimitra : Act II.

3. Ab. Ś. V. p. 101

4. Ab. Ś. VI. p. 132

5. विदूषकः —मम तावद्द्वाम्यामेव हास्यं जायते । स्त्रिया संस्कृतं पठन्त्या मनुष्येण च काकलीं गायता । स्त्री तावत्संस्कृतं पठन्ती दत्तन-वनस्येवगृष्टिः अधिकं सूक्ष्मशब्दं करोति । मनुष्योऽपि पकाकलीं गायन् शुष्कसुमनोदामवेष्टितो वृद्धपुरोहित इव मन्त्रं जपन् हृदं भे न रोचते ।

Mṛchha. III. Pp. 81-82

song and dance within the body-plot. There are stage directions indicating the permissibility of songs and dance where some celebration or enjoyment is indicated. But, generally speaking, after Kālidāsa, we do not have any author including these within the play, till the modern age. One may say that, there are verses sprinkled all over the play which can be sung; but this does not at all seem to be real music in any case. And, even these are lesser in number in the really good specimens of the Sanskrit plays. It was only later on when dramas lost their dramatic qualities and became stereotyped lyrical narrations, that the verse found greater importance, as in the case of the works of Murāri and Rājaśekhara. How far these devices were useful on the stage to interest the audience, is a doubtful point. Judging from our own experience, we will have to accept that song or dance or anything, for that matter, cannot be enjoyable or even useful if sense of propriety is not observed. Experience on the modern theatre, where particular preference is given to songs, has proved the undesirability of interrupting the smooth course of the development and action of the plot, in any way. Even if the music is exquisite, if it is brought in the midst of a period of tension, it will only sound a jarring note. These considerations, and also the disappearance of women from the stage in the later centuries, must have caused the complete absence of these elements on the Sanskrit stage.

But, with the revival of the dramas in the modern Indian languages, specially in Tamil, Bengali and Marathi, songs began to play an important part and this some times went to such an extent that the theme, plot and characterisation began to be sacrificed for the sake of songs and music. Extremes always lead to disgust and music was no exception to the rule. The later half of the 19th century and the beginning of the present century saw the renaissance, not only in social life, but in art and literature also, as we have

already noticed. The refined taste of the general public began to demand realistic idealism once more in the plays they liked to witness. The indiscriminate use of music within the course of action had to be stopped. At the same time, the writers also realised the effect of songs intelligently used in the proper place, and they took advantage of this to create more interest in this way. Sanskrit playwrights began to use songs within the play once more. The *Samyogita-pariṇaya* is one such play where both dance and music are used successfully for the first time in the modern age. The songs here are not used as part of the conversation, but only as means leading on to the development of the plot. Another point to be noticed here is that all these songs were to be sung by one or the other of the women characters of the play.

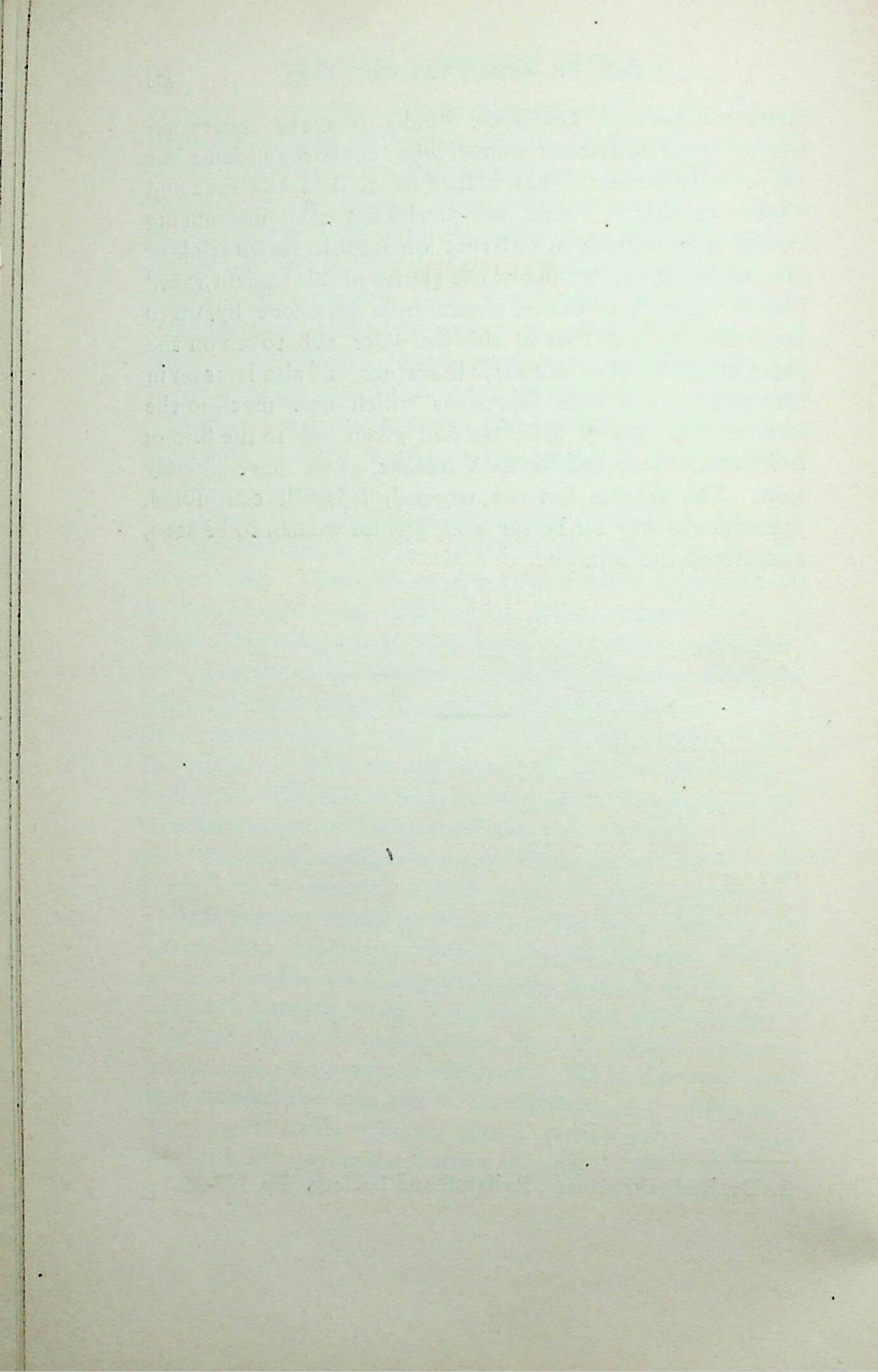
The vernacular plays, which had more advantages, because of the languages being in use, finally, fixed the place of music within the play, as we have seen in the previous chapter. The plays like the *Rakṣabandhan* (Hindi) of Harikrishna Premi, and similar plays have proved the effect of music on the aesthetic and psychological planes also. Along with the change that came over the social order, the patternisation of the dramas gave way to variety and realism. There is nothing that stays permanent in this world. Change being the spice of life, every art and science that contributes towards the progress of humanity, have to be themselves moving to keep pace with the same. We have noticed, in the very beginning that there was nothing that could help us to trace the evolution of the Sanskrit drama with any great certainty. We met with a full developed stage and we were forced to draw our own conclusions as best as we could. There were rules and regulations on the theoretical side which also have their own story to tell. But the discrepancy between the theory and the practice we visualised in the later age, also sets us thinking. Still, when

we come down to the present age and examine the plays in the various Indian languages and also Sanskrit, we are able to find how the rules and regulations laid down in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* are finding their fulfilment in these works. Now, we have plays with all sentiments depicted in them with a real reflection of the human life that is expected to be copied with ingenuity. The requirement of Bharata, to combine instruction with enjoyment seems to be now reaching its fulfilment. There seems to be nothing wrong in concluding that the dramatic art which was at its height of glory in the most ancient days and became lost or declined, has now once again found its way upwards to help humanity on its onward march.

As we have tried to show in the previous pages, the women characters of the Sanskrit plays have their own story to tell. They told us about the warlike Kṣatriyas and spiritually advanced Brāhmaṇas whose supplements and complements they themselves were; they told us also about how they, by their own nature, had to suffer the disadvantage of being considered as rivals by the religious teachers, and how consequently they had to climb down to the lowest point in the social scale; they also told us how the Kṣatriyas held out to a certain extent, keeping their own counsel and thus saved their own selves and also the whole woman kind; they told all this and much more. Later on we saw how the revival of the status of women came through these specks of light kept up by the princesses of the old, fanned by the advent of new ideas and ideals in the modern age. Though secluded within the four-walls of the home, they had kept the torch burning, to be unveiled at a time when darkness engulfed the whole nation in the form of slavish mentality which came as a result of ignorance. When the time came, they heeded the call and came forward with undaunted spirit, indomitable self-respect and un-relenting self-sacrifice, to stand beside the man for the sake of universal pros-

perity and peace of humanity. "India in every generation has produced millions of women who never found fame but whose daily existence has helped to civilize the race and whose warmth of heart, self-sacrificing zeal, unassuming loyalty and strength in suffering when subjected to trials of extreme severity, are among the glories of this ancient race.¹ This is the story of Indian woman from ages gone by, up to date, and the glimpses of this we were able to see on the pages of the Sanskrit dramatic literature, and also later on in dramas of the modern languages which owe much to the former. The Sītā of Kālidāsa had given life to the Sītā of Dvijendralal Roy and Mama Varerkar, as we have already seen. The process has not stopped; it is still continuing, opening the way for better and greater women to be seen, understood and followed.

1. Dr. Radhakrishnan : Religion and Society. Pp. 197-98



APPENDIX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ICONOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

It is said, "Nature is the art of God. The human art is but its imitation".¹ As about every other science, there are minute details given about the arts, for example, painting, drawing and sculpture, in the ancient Indian literature. According to an admired connoisseur of arts, the very ancient paintings constituted "a kind of writing intelligible to all in those days. When all could not read, this was the way open to instruct people in past history, purāṇas, legends etc. The caves at Verul and Ajantā are books on history of those times, and these places are, as it were, libraries or reading-rooms and universities giving religious instructions of which all can take advantage". This is true also about other relics and artistic remains available to us today through the efforts of the archaeological excavators and surveyors. The ruins of buildings, the pictures carved or drawn on the walls, stūpas, etc. and the decorations on doors, arches, walls and ceilings of buildings speak of the people and their culture of the contemporary times. Basing on this assumption, we are justified in trying to look for evidences in the archaeological and iconographical works to corroborate our findings in the course of the study recorded in the previous pages.

As we examine the art-works found in various places, two schools of artists, representing two different cultures

1. सृष्टिः देवशिल्पम् । तस्याः प्रतिकृतिः मानुषं शिल्पम् ।

seem to us to have been at work—the caves of Ajantā and Verul representing one school, and the stūpas etc. of Sāñcī and Bharhut representing the other. It has not been possible to get all the material to illustrate the findings to the full. There are enough evidences that illustrate the verbal portraits drawn by the various authors up to the 17th century. There are others which show a previous knowledge of such descriptions; or, in other words, the pictures and sculptures that seem to be inspired by the earlier authors. An attempt is made in the following pages to describe and illustrate a few of such sculptures and paintings.



Ardhanarīśvara : Cave I, Bādāmi, Western Cālūkyā, 6th century A. D.

Here Śiva is visualized as half female, with Pārvatī and Yatī forms also shown separately as art symbols.

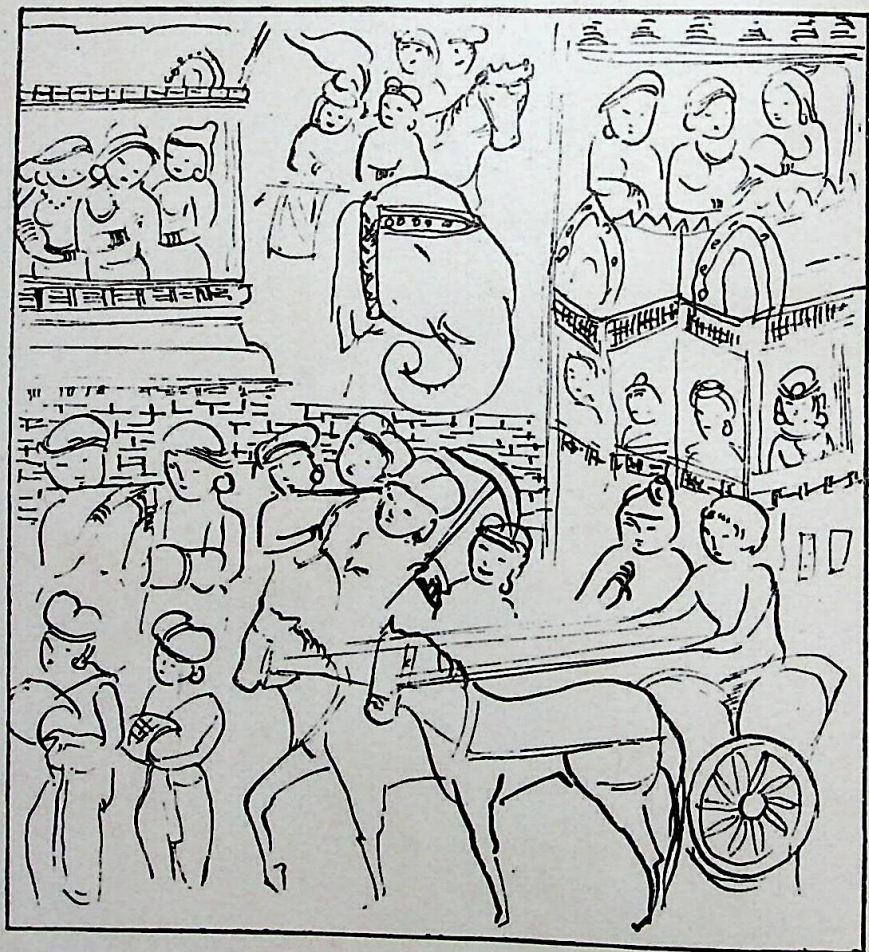
एकैश्वर्ये स्थितोऽपि प्रणतबहुफले यः स्वयं कुत्तिवासाः
कान्तासंमिश्रदेहोऽप्यविषयमनसां यः परस्ताद्यतीनाम् ।
अष्टाभिर्यस्य कृत्स्नं जगदपि तनुभिर्बिभ्रतो नाभिमानः
सन्मार्गालोकनाय व्यपनयतु स वस्तामसीं वृत्तिमीशः ॥

—*Mālavikāgnimitra*

The following plates (Nos. II, III, & IV) representing the sculpture and painting of a thousand years from the 1st or 2nd century B. C. to the 8th century A.D. show that women during this period did not use the veil. Headwear is seen in plates II and III which, in all likelihood, must have been the fashion among the higher classes.

Women are watching the procession from balconies without the veils but they are using headwears.

PLATE II



A royal procession : Northern Gateway, Sāncī, 1st or 2nd century B. C.

PLATE III



Worship of the Bodhi Tree : Western Gateway, Sāñchī, 1st or 2nd century B. C.

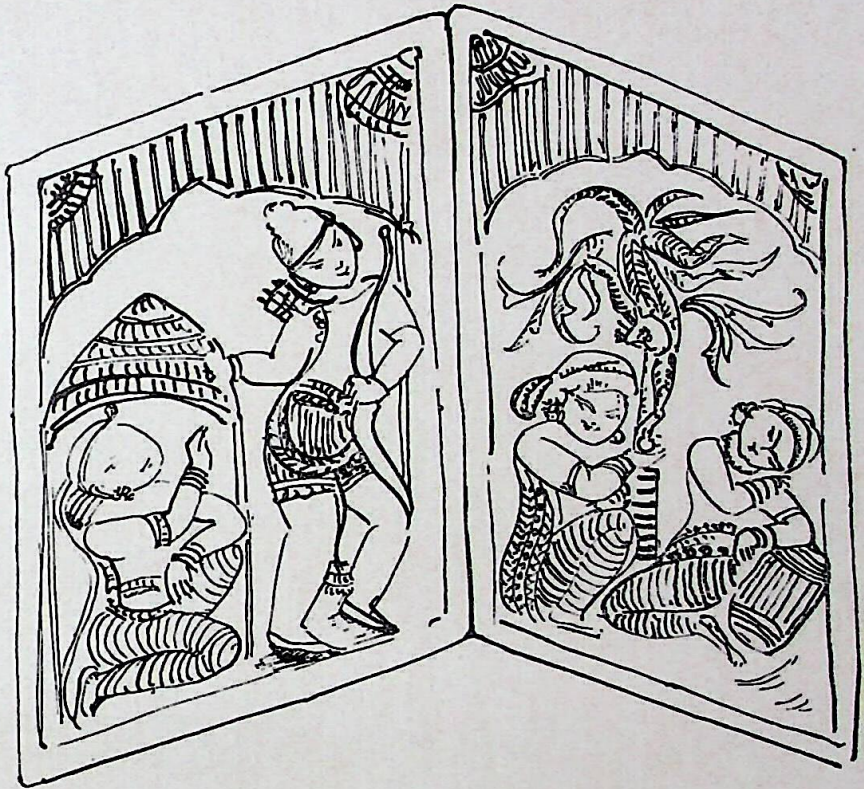
Women are offering worship in a mixed throng without the veil, but they have headwears.

PLATE IV



*Rājā in procession : Ajantā Frescoes from wall-paintings. Cave 1.
Vākāṭaka, 6th century A. D.*

The *chhatra* shows the lady on horseback in front of the king to be the Rājī, which, if correct, indicates the royal custom of the time. All women are without the veil and even without headwears. One of the women is holding a sword and another a staff or a javeline.



A scene from the Rāmāyaṇa. A terracotta plaque from Nandor, district Birbhum. Folk art. 17th century A. D.

(a) *Left* : Sītā reprimanding Lakṣmaṇa for his delay in succouring Rāma in his hunt for the deer (Māyāmṛga). The noble warrior recoils against Sītā's anger and reluctantly leaves her in fateful isolation.

सीता—शृणु लक्ष्मण ! किं न त्वरसे । अनन्तरगामिनी स्त्रीणां लक्ष्मीः । न खल्वहम् । एकं तमेव ।

लक्ष्मणः — (कर्णो पिधाय) शान्तं पापं शान्तं पापम् ।

अपि मां विजल्पसि गभीरधियां

प्रथमा सती यदविचार्यं चला ।

तदुपस्थिता तव विपन्नियतं

परिवर्तते प्रकृतिरापदि हि ॥

—Āścaryacūdamani

—Āścaryacūdamani

(b) *Right* : Sītā in the Aśokavanika.

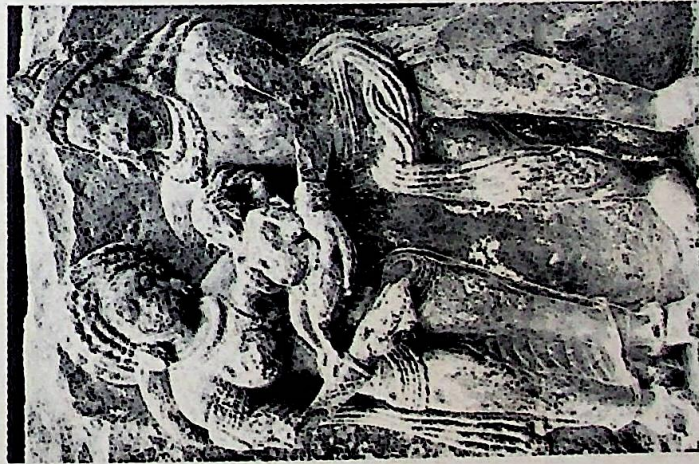
PLATE VI

*Amazon Palace
Guard: Mathurā
Museum, Kus-
han, 2nd cen-
tury A. D.*



Yavani or
Kirātī is men-
tioned by Kālī-
dāsa as the
keepers of wea-
pons.

PLATE VII



Kṛṣṇa is born
and Devakī is
handing him
over to Vasu-
deva to take
him to Go-
kula.
(Bālacaritaṃ
of Bhāsa)

*Devakī and Vasudeva : Devagharh,
5th century A. D.*

PLATE VIII



One of the
chief means
of sporting
was the swing
which still
continues to
command the
same populari-
ty.
(Mālavikāgni-
mitra.)

*Woman in a Swing : Cave No. 2, Ajanta, 6th
century A. D.*

PLATE VI

*Amazon Palace
Guard : Mallurā
Museum, Kus-
han, 2nd cen-
tury A. D.*



Yavani or
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*Devakī and Vasudeva : Devagharh,
5th century A. D.*

PLATE VIII



*Woman in a Swing : Cave No. 2, Ajanta, 6th
century A. D.*

One of the
chief means
of sporting
was the swing
which still
continues to
command the
same populari-
ty. (Mālavikāgni-
mitra.)

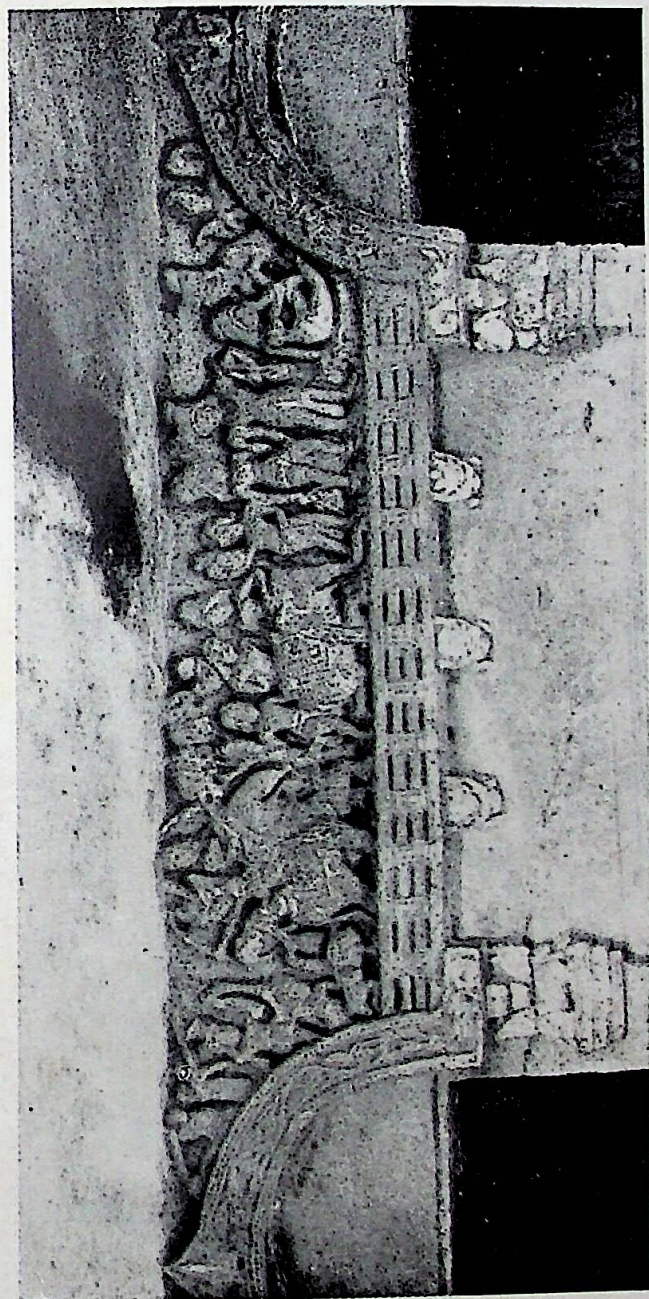
PLATE IX

*Woman under the
Raktāsoka tree :
From a railing
pillar, Kuśana,
2nd century A. D.*



According to the beliefs of the times Raktāsoka tree could blossom by the touch of the foot of a pure girl of noble family. Kālidāsa refers to this in his poems and dramas.

PLATE X



Ganesh Gumpah Panel : Khandagiri, 1st century B C.

The picture shows towards the left end, a king carrying away a princess on an elephant. A similar situation is described in the Pratiñā-Yougan-dhārāyaṇa where Udayana carries away Vāsavadattā.

PLATE XI



*A medallion showing subjugation of Nalagiri : Amaravati, 1st
or 2nd century A. D.*

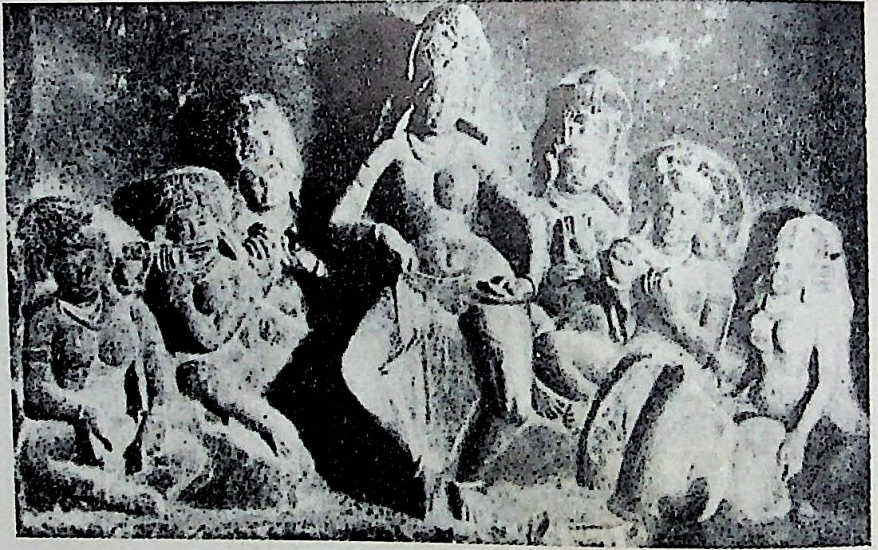
—Pratijñayaugandharāyana



*Musicians : Wall-painting from Cave 17, Ajantā, Vākāṭaka,
6th century A. D.*

The young girls of royal or noble families were expected to learn dancing, music and painting. The earlier Sanskrit plays make particular reference to their necessity. Almost all the heroines of the Nūṭakas, like Vāsava-dattā of Bhāsa, Mālavikā and Irāvati of Kālidāsa, are examples. In the Rāmāyaṇa there is a reference to a women's dramatic troupe. The various carvings and paintings in the caves of Ajantā and other places corroborate such statements.

PLATE XIII



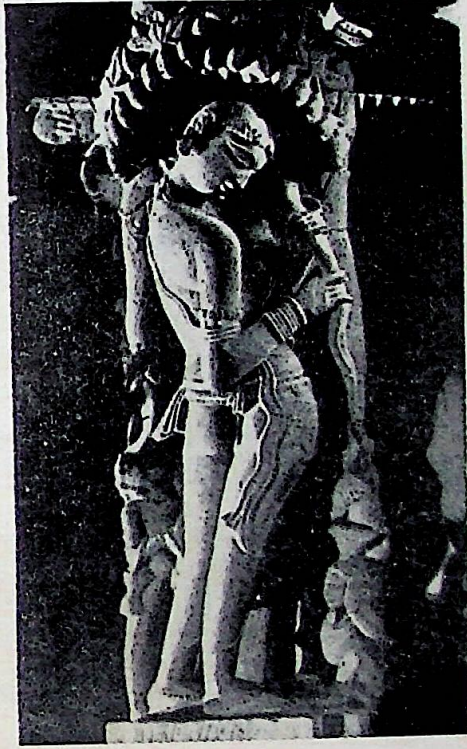
Women's Orchestra : Cave 7, Aurangabad. Vākaṭaka, 5th century A. D.

This seems to be a representation of a dance and drama troupe, as referred to in the Rāmāyaṇa.

वधूनाटकसंघैश्च संयुक्तां सर्वतः पुरीम् ।

—Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa

PLATE XIV



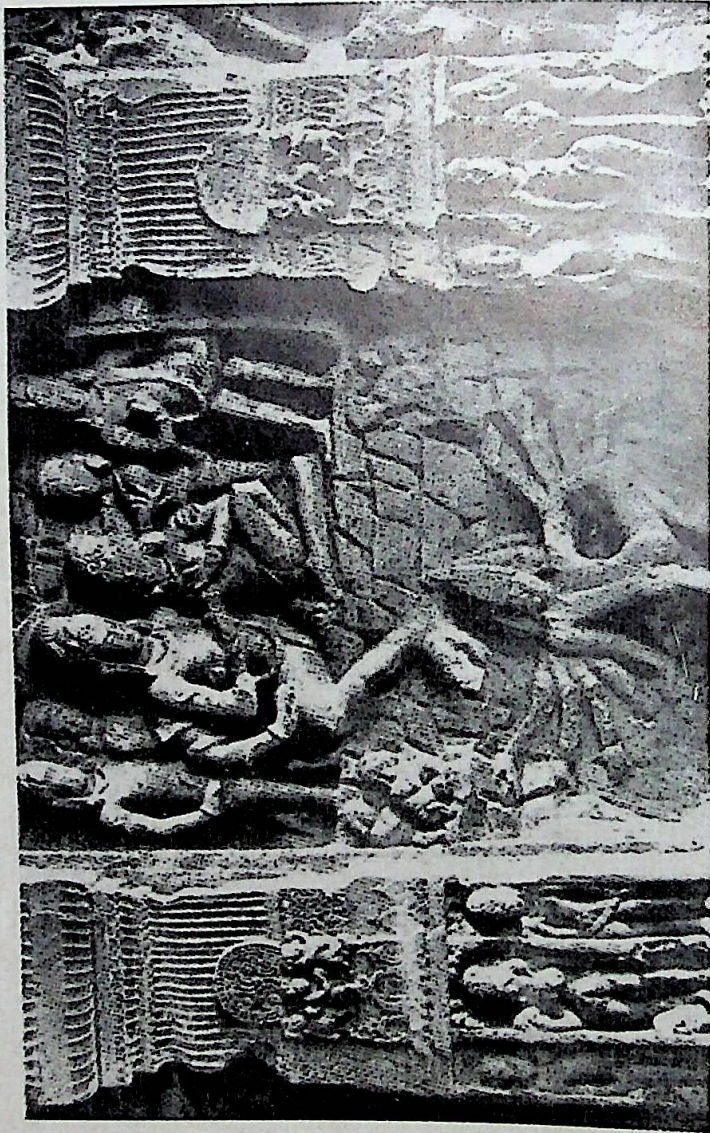
A bracket figure : Lakṣmana Temple, Khajuraho, 10th century A. D.

The picture seems to represent the Hermitage—"Pārṇakuṭī", prepared by Lakṣmaṇa, as in the Āscaryacūdāmaṇi. The leafy decorations and door-like arch are additional similarities.

लक्ष्मण—

ज्यावोषेण निराकरोमि भयदान् पर्यन्तभाजो मृगान्
 पर्णैः सद्यः समापयामि शयनं वध्नामि पुष्पच्छदैः ।
 वेत्राणामुपपादयामि वलयैरायामितां विष्टरं
 सिञ्चामि क्षितिमाद्रपङ्कजरजोविद्धैरपां रेणुभिः ॥

—Āscaryacūdāmaṇi



Cave 14, Ellora, 6th century A. D.

विशीर्णमुकुटावलिगलितालकस्साश्रुभिर्मुखैर्दंशभिरुद्धमन् श्वसितमुग्रमायासभाक् ।
भुजैः प्रणिहितैरघो गिरिवरस्थ धिक् मंकटे तटे भुठति केवले महिमशालितामग्रश्री ॥

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